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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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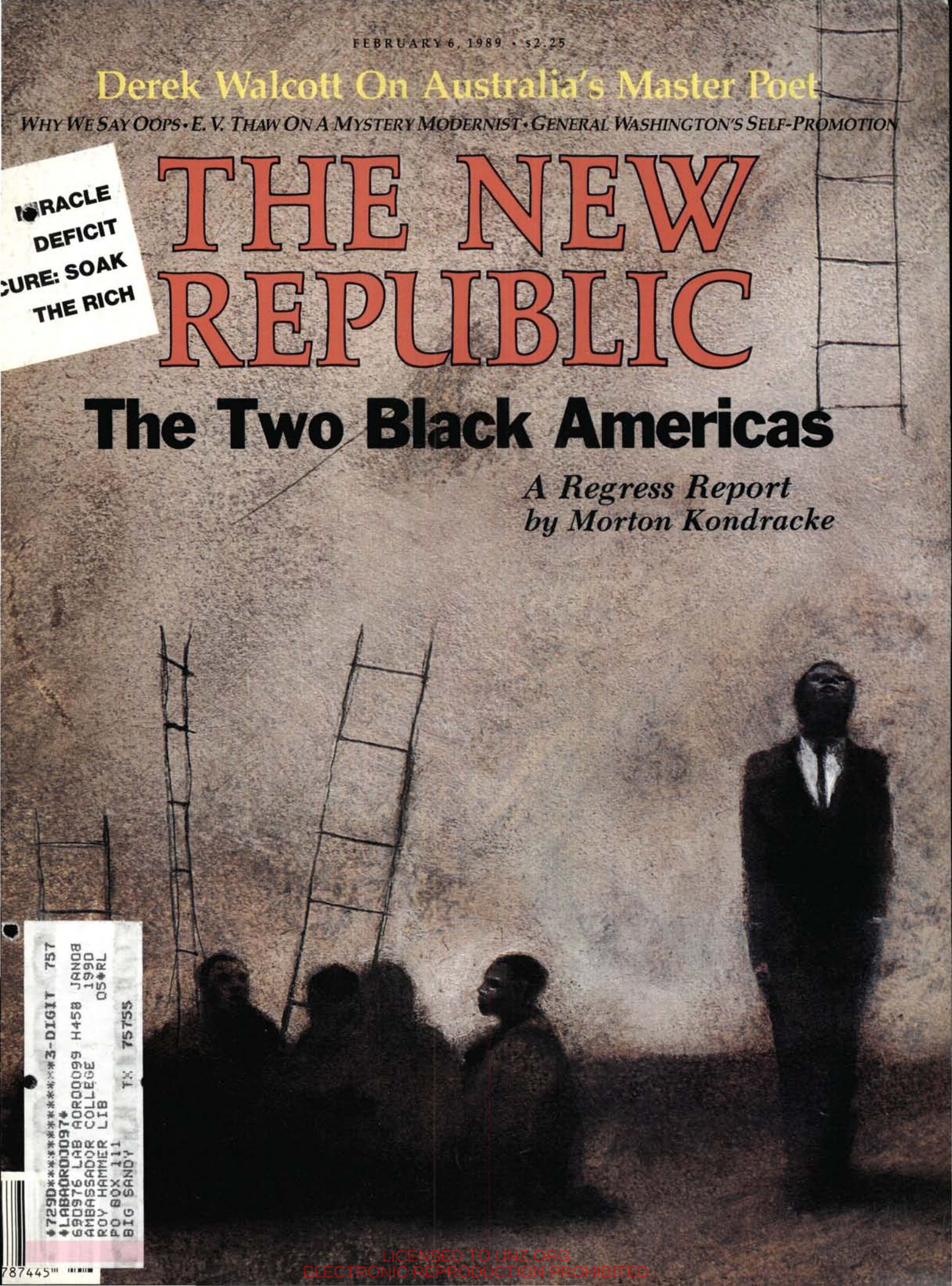

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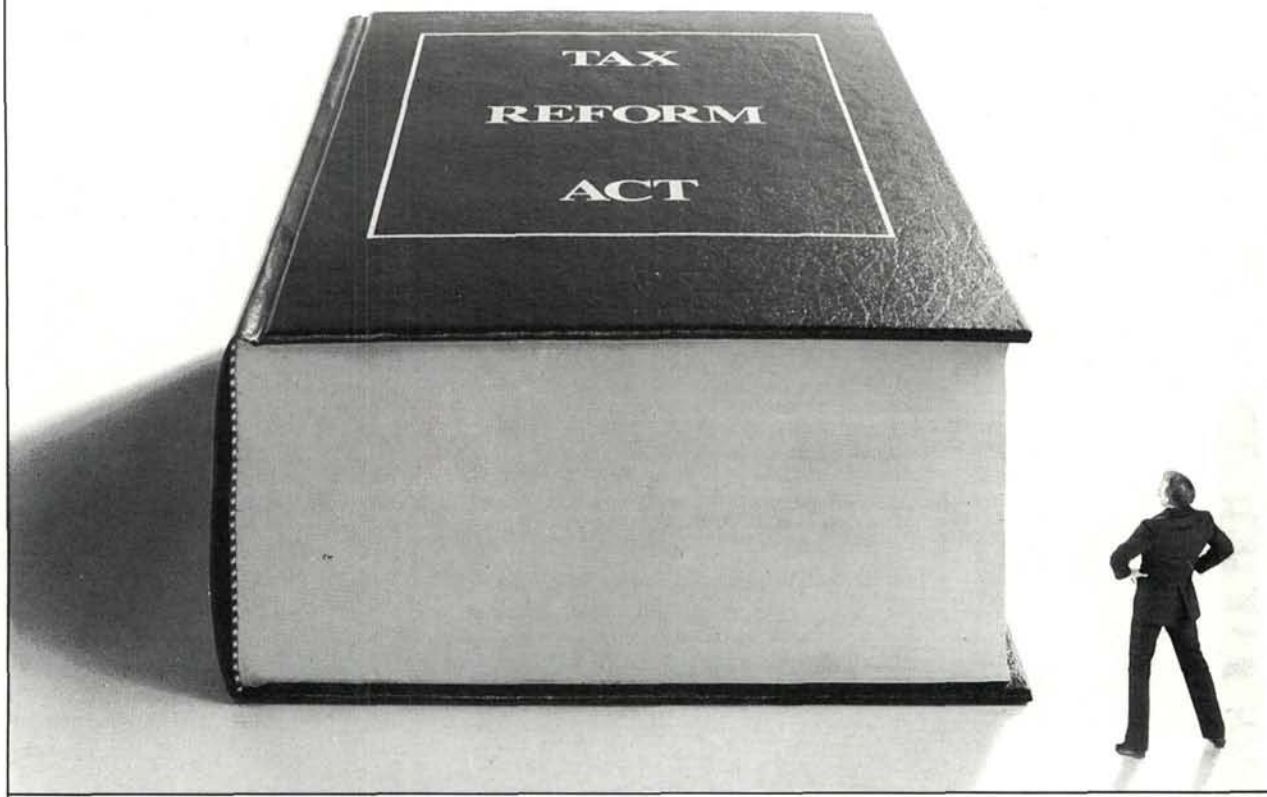

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FROM WASHINGTON

I HAD A DREAM

The last eight years have given us FAX machines, car phones, compact disks, and laptops, but maybe it's just as well nobody has invented a time machine. Because if somebody had, my 1981 self might have received a visit from my 1989 self, and I'm not sure my 1981 self could have stood the aggravation.

"Here's what's happening," the '89 me might tell the '81 me. "We never had that nuclear war you were so worried about. Ditto any new Vietnams. Unemployment's way down. Inflation's almost invisible. There's a woman on the Supreme Court. A movie glorifying Gandhi won the Oscar. The Russians lost in Afghanistan. They'll be out of there in a couple of weeks. Also, they're taking half a million troops plus all their missiles out of Eastern Europe, they published *Darkness at Noon*, *1984*, and *Dr. Zhivago*, and Sakharov's back in Moscow troubleshooting for the new Party boss. Martin Luther King's birthday is a national holiday. Jeff Greenfield is a TV star. They've got democracy in Argentina, the Philippines, Pakistan, and South Korea. The national security adviser is a black guy. The PLO swore off terrorism. The Chileans voted to kick out Pinochet—"

"Wait a minute," the '81 me would interrupt. "What is all this? Did they invalidate the results of the 1980 election? Did Reagan and Bush resign and let Tip O'Neill take over? Did benevolent aliens conquer the planet?"

Of course, now-me would be putting then-me on a bit, not by saying anything untrue, exactly, but by leaving a few things out—things about the Reagan era that haven't been so attractive, like sleaze, homelessness, Lebanon, yuppie scum, the deliberate fostering of extremes of poverty and wealth, environmental negligence, Rambo movies, the selling off of the country's assets to foreigners, Iran-*contra*, staggering sums poured down Pentagon ratholes, and skinhead political TV game shows like "The McLaughlin Group," Morton Downey Jr., the Willie Horton commercial, etc.

Without exception, moreover, these nasty developments can be laid at the doorstep of Reagan and Reaganism. Allotting credit for the plus side is harder. Yes, you have to hand it to Reagan for Madame Justice O'Connor and for sticking to the bipartisan policy of aid to the Afghan resistance. But the advent of a Soviet leader willing to say yes to American arms control proposals that were offered only in the belief that they were too outlandish to be accepted was pure dumb luck. The economic boom, an orgy of consumption financed largely by foreign borrowing, did less than nothing to bolster the productive strength of the economy. If popular and congressional pressure had not deflected the Reagan administration from its original trajectory, the civil rights and environmental enforcement machinery of the government would have been destroyed, abortion would now be a crime, Falwellian Christian piety would be the state religion, the United States would have stuck with "friendly authoritarians" to the end, and American troops would in all likelihood be bogged down in a bloody war in Central America. The checks and balances, fortunately, checked and balanced.

Even so, it is customary to let presidents have the credit for everything good that happens on their watch (just as it is customary to heap blame upon them for everything that goes wrong). Reagan, in his farewell address from the Oval Office, made sure we got the point. The speech was devoted almost entirely to self-congratulation. And it was a good speech, in the Reagan manner—which is to say it was written for the ear, not the eye, and therefore contained little that will be useful to compilers of future editions of Bartlett's looking for a ringing quote.

One section appeared, to this onetime White House speechwriter's eye, to have been shoehorned in by the "principal" himself. In what he called the "great tradition of warnings in presidential farewells," Reagan reproached the movies, television, and young parents for failing to indoctrinate American youth in 200-proof patriotism, the way they did in his day. "If we forget what we did," said the man who still can't remember trading arms for hostages, "we won't know who we are." The section ended with this weird passage: "And children, if your parents haven't been teaching you what it means to be an American, let 'em know and nail 'em on it. That would be a very American thing to do." Actually, busting mom and dad for insufficient devotion to the fatherland is not a very American thing to do. It is a very Soviet thing to do, or would have been until recently.

Listening to Reagan, I thought back to this season eight years ago, when I was sitting up late in the Old Executive Office Building, working on an earlier farewell address. It was quiet in Jimmy Carter's White House. One could almost physically feel the power leeching across Lafayette Square to the Reagan transition headquarters, where limousines sat parked with their engines running in the cold and exhilarated aides bustled in and out. Carter's speech was quiet, too. He had one or two things to boast about, but boasting would have been grotesque after a defeat such as he had suffered. His speech was all "warnings"—against special interest politics, nuclear proliferation, degradation of the global environment, and the temptation to slacken in the struggle for human rights.

A few months later, after Reagan had been president for a while, I had a strange dream, one so vivid I remember it to this day. I was back in the E.O.B. Somehow I had been given a job on Reagan's staff. The telephone rang. "Please hold for the president," said a White House operator. The next voice was Reagan's. "I just wanted to thank you for that draft you sent over," he said. "It was very good. I'll be making a few changes in it, but I want you to know how much I appreciate your work." "Gee, thanks, Mr. President," I said. "That's all right," he said. "Well, have a nice day."

I awoke feeling an idiotic mixture of horror and affection. Eight years later, I cannot say whether Reagan is truly a "nice man" or not. The crinkly warmth he projected in his farewell speech and in so many others—that public personality with which, more than his programs or philosophy, he succeeded in captivating the American people—has always left me indifferent. By all reports he is unfailingly affable and polite; but he is said to have no real friends other than his second wife, and his relations with his children are such that two of them have written books scourging him. Yet there must be some sort of magic in the man. His presidency has been a dream. Time to get up.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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PROGRESSIVISM: CAN IT RISE AGAIN?

What accounts for the sustained, if uneven, decline of political progressivism over the last quarter century? (Rationalizations and superficial answers won't do.) While many factors can rightly be pointed to, not least an unpopular Vietnam war engineered by the "best and brightest" liberal technocrats, we at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW believe the decline has been ongoing because of three fateful and related factors of late-60s vintage: Progressives became disdainful of actual working people; disregarded family values; and lost touch with the traditional religious sensibilities of ordinary Americans.

However many worthy and ethical causes the left has championed — and they are legion — progressives lost the common touch and squandered much of their ethical capital. Consequently, at a profound and intuitive level, progressives lost the *confidence* of common people. And what is progressivism without the people?

Progressivism may be ailing, but it doesn't have to expire. Nor, in order to revive itself, does it need to mimic the brutalitarian neoconservatives. No, all it really needs — and desperately so — is to recapture its own best traditions. As Vanderbilt University political scientist Michael Nelson contended in our pages recently, every period of lasting reform in American history — from Jacksonian democracy and abolitionism through the Populist and Progressive eras, the New Deal, and the civil rights movement — has been animated by a profound *religious* yearning for the transformation of both society and individuals.

Today that yearning is as strong as ever, but most liberals have turned a cold shoulder to it, allowing it to be co-opted and twisted by yahoos, snake oil salesmen, and the vested interests. We say: This is not only dolorous and tragic, but self-defeating.

But there's hope: We are exploring religious commitments that yield humane social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as St. Francis, Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Tawney, Mounier, Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr, Schumacher, William Jennings Bryan, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Lech Walesa, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King Jr., and Archbishop Romero. Also, we probe the literary and philosophical riches offered by such greats as Dante, Emerson, Kierkegaard, Newman, Tolstoy, Buber, Auden, Eliot, Maritain, Merton, Silone, Thomas More, C.S. Lewis, Simone Weil, Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, and Graham Greene. In short, we facilitate your understanding of the social and intellectual vitality of religion and your appreciation of religion's resonances in both high and popular culture.

An ecumenical monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been acclaimed by *Utne Reader* as "original," by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively," and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky."

Those who write for us — Christopher Lasch, Robert N. Bellah, Jean Bethke Elshtain, J.M. Cameron, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Michael Lerner, Robert Coles, Richard J. Mouw, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and passion. We bat around a wide variety of issues, and defy easy pigeonholing.

If you want to recover the lost soul of liberal politics, if you want to see progressivism rise again, give us a try!

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TRADING PLACES

To the editors:
Protectionism's penalties do indeed extend beyond our shores to the workers of the developing world ("Scrooged," December 26). TNR's analysis can be taken one step further. The developing nations that are growing and prospering are becoming ever more important markets for U.S. exports—taking more than 35 percent of our exports last year. When ill-considered U.S. trade policy forces these nations to stop selling, they stop buying too. That costs American exports and American jobs. Protectionism "scrooges" not only the workers of the developing world but, on our interdependent globe, American workers and business as well.

ALAN WOODS
Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
TNR's astounding endorsement of worker exploitation in developing countries is just the latest instance of wide-eyed worship of free trade theories that only U.S. policy-makers cling to. Holding up Japan as an example is wrong: Japan's success primarily rests not on its early oppression of workers, but on its ruthless mercantilism in trade and its persistent protection of its domestic markets. The fact is that bloody-minded development practices were wrong for our "ancestors" here in the United States and are equally immoral today.

Many workers in Asia welcome the international spotlight on worker rights abuses. Trade unionists in Turkey and Thailand have used their countries' threatened loss of trade privileges under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences as leverage to improve wages and working conditions. Labor leaders in other countries have privately thanked the AFL-CIO and other groups for placing their governments on the griddle.

I don't believe that you really accept the brutal exploitation of workers as a natural element of a developing country's comparative advantage. You should get your noses out of dusty economics textbooks and take a look at the real world of work. You might be horrified at what you see.

CHARLES D. GRAY
Asian-American Free Labor Institute
Washington, D.C.

BUSH BY LAUREN

To the editors:
Am I to understand that the latest threat to popular democracy is that Ralph Lauren's tentacles of influence have now stretched into the White House ("Presidency by Ralph Lauren" by Alessandra Stanley, December 12)? If so, THE NEW REPUBLIC is at best a shaky redoubt for the "earth shoe" crowd.

ROBERT H. SIMON JR.
Arlington, Virginia

To the editors:
Those of us who have survived various wars, political and otherwise, for 12 generations with nary a polo pony or Brooks Brothers shirt to show for it can take comfort in one thing. We don't have to include Lee Atwater on our guest list.

NATALIE M. HOEY
Seattle, Washington

To the editors:
I must take issue with Alessandra Stanley's description of President-elect George Bush's pet dog as a "pedigree cocker spaniel." As an owner of one "pedigree" *English Springer Spaniel* who answers to the name of Deco Bauhaus, I am sure I speak for her and the thousands of other Springers who inhabit this great country when I say that they are sick and tired of being mistakenly identified. We're proud that one of ours will be in the White House. "Milly the English Springer Spaniel, First Dog." It has a nice ring to it.

JERRY M. MOSIER
New York, New York

MOURNING IN AMERICA

To the editors:
Fred Barnes's "Nap-Master Ronnie" (January 9 & 16) hit the bull's eye. Those who, like myself, were true Reaganauts recognized very early that the promise of a real "Reagan revolution" was almost certainly imaginary. For all he did for America—and it was not inconsiderable—President Reagan pretty much gave up early on most of the things he spoke so eloquently about in the years before his election. Under the care and feeding of Jim ("Pre-emptive Surrender") Baker and Mike ("Grief Avoidance") Deaver, Reagan ducked as many battles as possible and (unknowingly) abandoned the few loyal lieutenants who might have promoted the "revolution" he symbolized in the public's mind.

Ronnie, we hardly knew ye. Alas.

JOHN MCCLAUGHRY
Senior Policy Adviser, White House, 1981-82
Kirby, Vermont

CORRESPONDING NATURE

To the editors:
In "Fragments and Remnants" (December 19) the Cambridge Diarist traced the "death of letter writing" to our modern instruments of simultaneity, such as the telephone, TV, and radio. "Why wait?" he asks. Why, indeed. If information were the sole or central consideration, I'd agree with you. We like our news and information like eggs, as fresh as possible. And in this we're not so different from those Athenians of two millennia ago who spent their time, so St. Paul tells us, "in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." But letter-writing offers something more than up-to-the-minute news, just as your own magazine does, and just as all great literature does. I suspect that the human organism needs stability as much as change. Indeed, given the onslaught of one new thing after another in our time, with changes cascading upon us, the hunger for stability may take precedence. When the world is too much with us, there's special delight in hearing and telling some old thing for a change.

STEVE SIKORA
Albany, California

GOOD THINKING

To the editors:
Before reviewer Amy Gutmann gets the idea ("Principals, Principles," December 12) that the belief that "schools should cultivate good character" is well-nigh universal, allow me, please, a vigorous dissent. "The soundest method of moral education," wrote Mark Van Doren, "is teaching how thought is done." Schools ought to be in the virtually exclusive business of teaching people how to think well; good character—certainly good civic and political character—is largely a by-product of good thinking, leavened with tolerance and the ability (as Pascal put it) both "to believe and to doubt well."

ROBERT L. COHEN
Brooklyn, New York
continued on page 42

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
FEBRUARY 6, 1989

JUST SAY NO

Lloyd Cutler, chairman of the 1989 Commission on Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Salaries, is one of the deans of Washington's revolving-door corps, a wealthy Washington lawyer who has traveled the well-worn path between public service and private gain. So he is qualified, perhaps, to lament "the financial penalties of remaining in public service," which he did recently in justifying his commission's proposal for a 50 percent pay raise for some 2,000 top workers in the nation's three branches of government. Nonetheless, this idea, which was endorsed by Ronald Reagan and is set for virtually automatic congressional "enactment" in February, leaves much to be desired. While a case can be made for raising some federal salaries, there's no need for an across-the-board hike. It would reward the wrong people for the wrong reasons, and it would do so in a manner that's bound to erode the public's already fast-dwindling trust in their government.

The "Quad Commission," so called for its custom of meeting every four years, based its recommendations on a "growing trend toward early departure from public life." Public service just doesn't pay—or pay enough. Federal judges are "resigning their lifetime appointments at a higher rate than ever before," and the most senior executive branch officials average only 18 months in office. Worse still, "a growing number of incumbent members of Congress do not stand for re-election."

All of this sounds alarming. Is it true? Since 1980 four federal judges have left the bench per year, an attrition rate of one percent. This may be a "higher rate than ever before," but we're not ready to push the panic button. A larger problem than turnover on the federal bench is the amount of dead wood sitting on it. And when dead wood discovers that it's about to get a raise from $95,000 to $140,000, chances are it will put down roots.

The case for a 50 percent raise for congressmen rests on similarly shaky ground. It may be true, as Cutler would have it, that "a growing number of incumbent members of Congress do not stand for re-election" because of financial factors. But the number is so small that it can barely help growing. Moreover, those who *do* stand for re-election face only a two percent chance of getting unseated; a seat in the House of Representatives has become the closest thing we have to China's iron rice bowl. A bit more turnover in Congress wouldn't be a bad thing.

This is especially true in view of the motivations of those who choose to leave. When congressmen retire, they can—and often do—use the experience and connections they acquired at the taxpayers' expense to land jobs at double or triple their previous salaries. While some of them no doubt do this for pressing reasons (three kids in college, etc.), in many cases the decision reflects a fundamental lack of devotion to public service. Congressmen who view Congress as just another job aren't qualified for it. Call us idealists, but we believe that making the law of the land should be regarded as more of a privilege and a duty than a well-paid profession.

This gets at the fundamental confusion that lies at the heart of the Cutler proposal, especially as it applies to legislative and executive branch workers: the commission insists on comparing the salaries of top government workers with the salaries they command in the private sector *after* their government service. Such comparisons prove only how substantially a stint in government can inflate the earnings potential of an accomplished practitioner of inside-the-Beltway arts. The more valid comparison, if the point is to attract good people to government, is how much they can make in the private sector *before* they go to work for Uncle Sam. If, after their taxpayer-funded apprenticeship, their market value has grown dramatically, then that

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may be a sign of the sort of influence-peddling that should be stopped through tighter revolving door laws.

The Quad Commission would be more credible if it hadn't cooked its figures. It selected 1969 as its benchmark year for congressional pay, and then trumpeted the alarming decline of 35 percent in real-dollar salaries over the past 20 years. It made much less of the fact that congressional pay in 1969 was the highest in real terms that it has been this century. The commission also insisted that none of this will cost a penny: the proposed increases in executive branch salaries ($25 million this fiscal year, $40 million next) will be "offset by overall reductions in other budgeted personnel costs." So too in the legislature. This means $112 million can be chopped from the legislative and executive branch budgets in fiscal 1989 and 1990 by scrimping in areas like hiring, travel, supplies, and automatic data processing. One wonders how many other such cuts would become feasible if even bigger pay raises were put on the table.

Even if millions are squeezed out of "budgeted personnel costs," the gain won't cover the true costs of the pay raise, once we figure in the "cake rising" effect conveniently left out of the Quad Commission's equations. The hundreds of millions of dollars in short-term salary costs are nothing compared with the inevitably ensuing growth in salaries for civil servants of GS-15 rank and below. The political pressure to raise those salaries may take a year or two to well up, but once it does, it will not be appeased with less than several billion dollars.

What would a more discriminating panel have proposed? There certainly are people in government who need more money. Salaries of NIH scientists need to be competitive, for example. And federal judges warrant regional cost of living adjustments; as things stand, a federal judge in New Mexico is the richest person in town, while a federal judge in Manhattan is part of the great middle class. Similarly, provision for the higher cost of life in Washington may be in order for newcomers to Congress, who otherwise won't be able to afford housing both here and in their local districts. Veteran congressmen who own their homes and have benefited from two decades of Washington real estate inflation are hardly in need of a $45,000 raise.

The most offensive thing about Congress's maneuvering for more money is its subtle use of blackmail. Congressmen accept obscene amounts in honoraria from special interest groups, we're told, because otherwise they can't make ends meet. But if we give them this pay raise, then they'll think about putting an overdue end to honoraria. That's very generous of them.

NOTEBOOK

☐ IGNORANT, BUT NOT DUMB: "The survey of 1,006 randomly selected adults showed that more than eight out of ten respondents could not name even one incoming Cabinet member selected by President-elect George Bush. . . . Slightly under half rated Bush's appointments as either good or excellent. Almost four out of ten respondents said his selections were just fair or poor, while one out of six said they don't yet know enough to say." —*Washington Post*, January 17

☐ LOCAL NEWS: With this issue, TNR bids farewell to Andrew Sullivan, who has put in three years of yeoman service, first as a reporter-researcher and then as associate editor. He returns to Harvard to complete his Ph.D. dissertation. We wish him well.

☐ UNDERSTANDING THE JEWS:

Reaction From Jews In the U.S. Is Cautious

—*International Herald Tribune*, December 17

American Jewish reaction

Outrage at policy change

—London *Times*, same day

Lack of Jewish political outcry causes surprise in Washington

—London *Guardian*, same day

☐ TAKE TWO:

F.D.A. Panel Finds No Need for Change In Taking of the Pill

—*New York Times*, January 6

Cancer Experts See A Need for Caution On Use of Birth Pill

—same paper, next day

(thanks to Michael Aronson, Needham, Massachusetts)

☐ HUNG JURY:

Soviet Code to Retain Death Penalty

—*International Herald Tribune*, December 19

Kremlin moves towards death penalty abolition

—London *Times*, same day

☐ ON THIRD THOUGHT:

SEC takes tough look at leveraged buyouts

—*Boston Globe*, same day

Crack down on buyouts, SEC chief tells House panel

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, same day

Ruder Sees No Crisis in Buyouts

—*New York Times*, December 23

(thanks to Sanford Weiner, Newtonville, Massachusetts)

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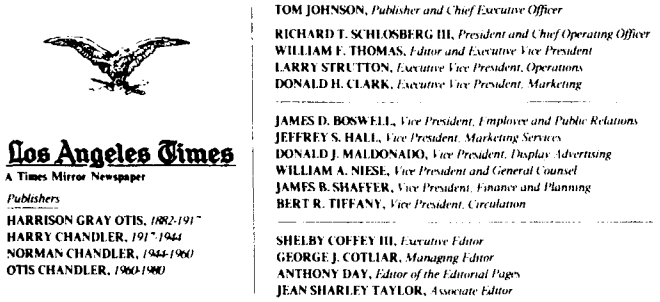
□ OH REALLY?

"But women are underrepresented, despite the growing cadre of accomplished Republican women. Just one woman, Elizabeth Hanford Dole, a veteran of three Republican administrations, has been named to the Cabinet. . . . Where women are concerned, Bush needs to fish in a deeper pond." —from an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, December 30


Los Angeles Times
A Times Mirror Newspaper
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JEAN SHARLEY TAYLOR, Associate Editor

—same paper, same day, same page

(thanks to Steven Madison, Los Angeles, California)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BUSH ROLLS RIGHT

ON THE SUNDAY morning before Labor Day, George Bush was at home watching the Q-and-A shows on television. This is a habit to which thousands in Washington (but few elsewhere) are addicted. Among other shows, Bush watched NBC's "Meet the Press." The guest was William Bennett, the outgoing education secretary. Bennett was sharply critical of Michael Dukakis for having vetoed a 1977 bill requiring Massachusetts teachers to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in class daily. "I lived in that Brookline-Cambridge world for eight years," he said. "Those are people who don't like things like the Pledge. They have disdain for the simple and basic patriotism of most Americans. They think they're smarter than everybody else, and they don't like those kinds of rituals. That bothers me. I think it should bother a lot of people."

Dukakis, a lot of Democrats, and most of the press were incensed at Bennett's attack, which wasn't spontaneous; he'd said the same thing a few days earlier in California. But Bush loved every word of it. Later that morning he went to the phone and called Bennett. Bill, he said, that was a great performance on "Meet the Press." Keep up the good work.

This small episode touches on something important that happened to George Bush in the 1980s. He changed, and so did a lot of other Republicans. A decade earlier, Bennett's fusillade would have repelled Bush. (Actually, Bennett wouldn't have unleashed it ten years ago. He's more conservative now, too, but that's another story.) Bush still may not feel comfortable bashing liberals in such polarizing language himself. But he likes it when he hears it now. Eight years of Ronald Reagan has done that, and a lot more, to Bush. Reagan's success has driven Bush and the GOP to the right.

You'd never know this from the postelection press coverage of Bush. His ascendancy has been heralded as the rebirth of centrism. Assessing Bush's Cabinet, R. W. Apple of the *New York Times* said its chief trait is "competence, not ideology." David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* said the centrist Establishment had taken over again. True, the Bush people are establishment; white males from the right prep schools and colleges are back in charge. But they're not centrist. On economic policy, Bush and James Baker, the new secretary of state, are unabashed supply-siders. On social policy, Richard Thornburgh has cast himself as the leading proponent of overturning the Supreme Court's *Roe* v. *Wade* decision, which legalized abortion. On relations with the Soviets, Bush and his national security advisers, Brent Scowcroft and deputy Robert Gates, have emerged as strong skeptics of Gorbachev. They don't buy the lovey-dovey line that Reagan endorsed in his farewell address.

Though the Bush administration is going to be more conservative than practically everyone expects, the rhetoric won't be. In his public utterances on everything but Gorbo, Reagan was relentlessly conservative and noisily nationalistic. Bush can't top him, and wouldn't dare try. But the Reagan reality was not as conservative, especially in Reagan's second term. Without saying much, Bush managed to persuade a group of New Right activists who met with him on December 11 that he'll at least be more conservative than second-term Reagan. "Bush comes out a little better [than Reagan]," said Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation. Weyrich believes the Bush administration to be "about the same on foreign policy and slightly better on the domestic side."

In staffing his administration, Bush took the position that he didn't have to allot spaces to identifiable conservatives because his own conservative credentials are intact. Still, without trying, he's created a conservative bloc in his Cabinet that is bound to be more effective than the maladroit Meese-Watt-Donovan-Weinberger clique under Reagan. The bloc consists of Vice President Dan Quayle, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack Kemp, drug czar Bennett, and White House chief of staff John Sununu. The key player is Sununu. Reagan had four chiefs of staff, none as conservative as Sununu. Sununu has yet to convince anyone that he's clever enough to succeed in Washington, but the Kemp and Bennett appointments are at least feathers in his cap. He strongly urged Bush to make them.

A network among the four conservatives already exists. In fact, all four of them tried to hire the same aide, William Kristol, son of Irving. Kristol was Bennett's chief of staff at the Education Department and could have gone to the drug czar's shop. Sununu offered him a White House post as Cabinet coordinator. Kemp wanted to make him chief of staff at HUD. But Quayle got him as his domestic policy adviser.

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Quayle insists he won't be the right's "spear carrier" at the White House, but he's spent much of his time since the election conferring with nearly every conservative figure in Washington. Quayle is preparing to step forward as an upbeat, youth-oriented conservative in the Kemp mold. In the Republican Party, "He'll be the high road to Lee Atwater's low road," says a White House official. Atwater, who choreographed Bush's attacks on Dukakis in the presidential campaign, is now Republican national chairman.

Quayle has another right-wing role. He's a spokesman for the fervently anti-Soviet wing of the administration. This wing reinforces Bush's own instinctive wariness of Gorbachev and his stratagems. Bush resisted one of these ploys at the New York summit in December when he brushed aside Gorbachev's bid for an early summit. Scowcroft, the national security adviser, believes Reagan was naive in the extreme in seeking to ban all nukes with the Soviets around. With Bush's encouragement, Scowcroft recruited Gates, formerly the deputy CIA director, as his No. 2. Bush knows and likes Gates. In a speech last October, Gates said he is "doubtful that Mr. Gorbachev can, in the end, rejuvenate the [Soviet] system." Gates said the United States should encourage *perestroika*, but not finance it. His speech enraged George Shultz, Reagan's secretary of state, who personally rebuked Gates. Bush liked the speech.

The perfect analogue to the shift from Reagan to Bush is the switch at the Justice Department from Edwin Meese III to Richard Thornburgh, the former governor of Pennsylvania. Thornburgh is not a Reaganite conservative. He doesn't deliver the conservative rhetoric that Meese did, but I'll bet he turns out to be far more successful in achieving conservative goals. In one of his first acts as attorney general, Thornburgh petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*. Then in a January 13 interview on CNN's "Evans & Novak" show, he flatly predicted that the 1973 ruling will be reversed this year. He also said he favors repeal of the special prosecutor law. And he criticized the procedure followed by Lawrence Walsh in indicting Oliver North before ascertaining that classified documents critical to his case would be available. Thornburgh, by the way, says he has a "very conservative bent."

According to the conventional wisdom, Thornburgh is supposed to represent the revival of the GOP moderates. So is Louis Sullivan, Bush's choice as secretary of health and human services. Sullivan, who is black, was picked because he's a pal of the Bushes. He was dean of Morehouse School of Medicine, and Barbara Bush sits on the school's board of trustees. Next to the Bushes, the biggest booster of Sullivan was Representative Newt Gingrich, the Georgia Republican. The Sullivan nomination infuriated pro-lifers because Bush had promised them he'd pick someone avowedly anti-abortion to run HHS. Sullivan is fuzzy on abortion. But in meetings with Republican Representatives Vin Weber of Minnesota and Chris Smith of New Jersey and right-to-life activist Kay James, Sullivan pledged to pursue an anti-abortion agenda. He also agreed to staff the upper reaches of HHS with pro-lifers. Weber, Smith, and James were amazed, and happy. Whatever happens, they're convinced Sullivan will be more conservative on abortion and other issues than his predecessor, Otis Bowen.

Bush's enthusiasm over Bennett's TV trashing of the Brookline-Cambridge crowd produced a tangible benefit for conservatives. It led to Bennett's appointment as drug czar. Remembering the Bennett performance, Bush called him a few days after the election and thanked him for his help. In their chat, Bennett said he didn't want a job in the Bush administration. By then, he'd embarked on a lucrative schedule of speeches at $15,000 an appearance. That wasn't the only reason. Bennett also feared the Bush administration would be rudderless and weak. He began to change his mind when Bush announced the Kemp pick on December 19. That same day Bennett phoned Bush and said he'd like to be considered for drug czar. Most of Bush's aides, except Sununu, were opposed. They said Bennett wasn't a team player and lacked the diplomatic touch needed to coordinate the drug fight. Besides, Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, Bush's longtime friend, had a candidate, Johnson & Johnson chairman James Burke. Bush ignored his old pal and went with his new one.

FRED BARNES

The etymology of 'Oops!'

ZSUPSZ!

MY ADMIRATION for the readers of TNR has only been fortified by the dedication, solemnity, and etymological fancifulness with which they have answered my plea for an explanation of why we say "Oops!" (See Washington Diarist, January 2.) The responses have come from a satisfying cross section of the states, representing all regions of the Union, with the exception of the Pacific Northwest, the Southwest, Hawaii, and Alaska. The Midwest made a particularly strong showing, while the Ivy League was notably barren of invention.

I have to rule out those who only went to the dictionaries, as I had already done, to report the first known written use of "Oops!"—in 1933, according to the OED. This does not explain the origin of the word, or why we use the sound. The dictionaries also do not help when they refer us to "Whoops!" which I agree is an alternative, but not demonstrably a prior one, and still explains nothing. Indeed, Daniel Buck and Anne Meadows, of Washington, D.C., while pointing out that the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (2nd edition unabridged, 1987) says that "whoops" gave rise to "oops," observe sharply that then "Messrs. Random contradict themselves and cite 'oops' as 'orig, uncert.' "

Several readers were exhilarated by the fact that "whoop" is the cry of a hunter—although I cannot see

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what that has to do with the occasions on which we say "Oops!"—and Buck and Meadows are carried away on the chase, citing whoopee, whoopla, whoopee cushion, hoopla, hoop-de-do, whoop-de-do, whooping crane, whooper swan, and whooping cough (formerly hooping-cough), on through hoop to the hoot of an owl, "or anything else that might sound plausible"—the last resort, one often thinks, of the etymologists.

Margaret H. Shea, of Camden, Maine, who "had the advantage of growing up in the horse-drawn age," leaves the hunt, slows the pace, and refers to her father, "an excellent handler of skittish horses," who in an emergency often said a prolonged "Ooo" instead of "Whoa" to a horse, although she does not recall that the letter P was pronounced. This does not deter her, and she asks us to consider a "spooky" mare of "tender sensibilities crossing a bridge at, unfortunately, the very moment a train rushes under it. Her driver doesn't have the 'word time' to distinctly use the 'wh' sound. So he says 'ooooo,' an approximation of 'Whoa' meaning 'Stop' or 'Take it easy.' " I agree that this is an absorbing vignette of rural history, but it is slightly flimsy evidence for her suggestion that "perhaps an old-time rural corruption of 'Whoa' has found its way into office-corridor collisions."

INTERESTING evidence is supplied by Helen N. Elderkin (no address, unfortunately, on her letter), who says that she has always thought that "Oops!" dated from a cartoon from the classic days of the *New Yorker*. It is a cartoon of a falling acrobat looking back peevishly at the partner who has failed to catch his wrists, who is saying, "Oop—sorry." Since the cartoon was published in 1932, Helen Elderkin has found an earlier first written use than that in the OED.

This also supports the suggestion of several readers that the S in "Oops" is the beginning of "sorry," a theory, as Wiley G. Gary, of Norfolk, Virginia, points out, that is advanced by John Ciardi in *A Browser's Dictionary*: "As conjecture only, since no evidence is available, I take the *oop* to be a reflex inhalation, the *s* to be the beginning of a bitten-off 'sorry,' for one often hears 'Oop—sorry' and even 'Oop—so.' "

Clearly the most hopeful approach is to begin with the "reflex inhalation." Paul Wagner, of Tallahassee, Florida, states that "Oops!" is

> a combination of the vocal and the phonetic. Whenever this word (or its equivalent in any other language) is used, there is an instinctive widening of the eyes, like side-by-side balloons that have suddenly been inflated, followed by an immediate deflation once that surprise has been absorbed. The first two letters in 'oops' represent, visually, that inflation, while the last two conveniently provide the sound of deflation.

This has the ring of authority, but has to compete with the evidence brought forward by Christopher S. Purcell, of Kansas City, Missouri:

> When I'm mildly or pleasantly surprised—by a near miss, a paper cut, or a pretty face—I purse my lips and say /oo/. (The /p/ happens when my mouth pulls shut like that of a drawstring purse, and the /s/ is just more air escaping through relaxed, *un*pursed lips.) It's not just me; the apes I see on TV do it, and so does my nephew, of whom I enclose a picture. The sound seems ancient and universal.

The photograph is of an alert infant boy in his high chair, indeed with balloon eyes and pursed mouth. But my guess would be that he is saying only "Oooo," which children say a lot, and not "Oops!"

In the search for ancient origins, Michael C. D. MacDonald, of New York City, refers me to the "poppysms" of ancient Rome, as described by Juvenal's translator, Peter Green, note 41, Satire VI of the Penguin edition: "A sound made with the lips to avert the evil eye or similar maleficent influences; it may still be heard today in the 'po-po-po-po' of a Greek peasant woman when she is told bad news."

THE EVIL EYE also makes an appearance in the response of Peter Dreyer, of Charlottesville, Virginia. He begins by suggesting that "Oops!" was originally "an invocation of the god Pan, causer of sudden, inexplicable panic and confusion. Its purpose was to avert the evil eye, and it survives in modern Greek as the untranslatable, but multipurpose *Opa*!" He then chases after Artemis, Mistress of Wild Beasts, intimately connected with Pan in mythology, and points out that Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* defines "Oupis" as "name of Artemis." Noting that Pan is a deity of ancient Indo-European origin, also found in the Vedic pantheon as Pūsán, from there Dreyer takes flight:

> "Oops!" is thus likely to be common to Indo-European languages, but not to others. And indeed if a Turk bumped into Mr. Fairlie at that sharp L-turn in his corridor, he would say: *Happi yuttum*! which sounds nothing like "Oops!" Against this view, however, it is true that the Hungarian *Zsupsz!* . . . is non-Indo-European but sounds rather similar to its English equivalent.
>
> If this hypothesis doesn't win me Mr. Fairlie's bottle of port, here's another: "Oops!" derives from *ooplah*, Anglo-Indian for the Hindi *uplā*, cow dung, first shortened to "Oop" by the cockney soldiery who carried the word back to England and then supplied with a terminal *s* under the inexorable law by which the plural tends to drive out the singular. It therefore simply means "Oh, shit!"

I offered a bottle of vintage port of a fine year to anyone who solved the puzzle. Clearly the winner must be Peter Dreyer, and at his suggestion, made when I called to inform him of his laurel, I will find an excuse for transporting it myself to Charlottesville, at which point he said, we could share in enjoying it. Unfortunately, after being jostled all the way from Washington to Charlottesville, the port would have to stand for several days before he decanted it, otherwise he would find later that he would be swallowing a mouthful of sediment. *Zsupsz!*

But it is all the readers who responded who deserve congratulation. Margaret Shea said, "I ain't no Bill Safire." Personally, I think that, in face of this outburst from TNR's readers, William Safire should pull his socks up.

HENRY FAIRLIE

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How to soak the filthy rich.

THE 1 PERCENT SOLUTION

FOR THOSE unacquainted with the majestic vistas of American class structure, a visit to eastern Long Island provides a breathtaking introduction. The social incline begins its ascent in the working-class lowlands of Hauppauge and Farmingdale, climbs through the rolling middle-class foothills of Riverhead, and then rises sharply to a chain of Himalayan-like peaks somewhere between Wainscott and East Hampton. Here lives a small but hardy tribe of the permanently rich, heirs to vast fortunes left behind by the inventors of bandages and ball bearings and ball point pens. They are surrounded by professional caretakers, a large detachment of "guard labor," and a celebrity encampment that includes Faye Dunaway and Bianca Jagger, Paul Simon and William Simon, David Frost and Alistair Cooke. A short distance down the mountain is a large band of Reagan revolution arrivistes, mainly investment bankers and real estate developers busy securing footholds and adjusting to the altitude.

One striking fact about these mountain-dwellers is how much they consume. In July and August, the Hamptons' high season, the well-heeled flock here from Park and Fifth Avenues to their summer dachas, and a whole cottage industry economy springs up: art and antique dealers, fine jewelers, dress designers, restaurateurs, wine merchants, plus a migrant army of pool cleaners, tree groomers, tennis and golf pros, caterers, fishing guides, private pilots, attending psychiatrists, dog sitters, and masseuses. Three Mile Harbor overflows with $75,000 Pearson sailboats and $800,000 Hatteras yachts. Main Street and Newtown Lane are clogged with exotic imported cars. Ralph Lauren drives by in his yellow 1930s Bugatti, one of 20-odd classics he owns.

Hidden within this pageant of prodigality is a key to cutting the federal budget deficit: luxury taxes. Right now Congress is busy rounding up things to tax. The usual suspects include gasoline, Social Security benefits, mortgage interest payments, and "sin." The weight of these taxes would fall most heavily on ordinary people. It looks like old mortgagees who drink, smoke, and drive are in trouble. For their sake, we'd like to add "gluttony" to the list. If we were to tax away slightly less than one-twentieth of the income of the top one percent of households—the 900,000 families with incomes over $200,000 and an average income of over $500,000—we could easily meet the Gramm-Rudman targets for federal deficit reduction.

There are compelling reasons for a consumption tax on the very rich. The first is to increase equity. There has been a sharp dilution of progressive taxation, and an alarming increase in the gap between the very rich and the rest of us. Even before Reagan arrived, the top five percent of families were getting more income each year than the bottom 40 percent.

Moreover, the American propertied classes have simply not held up their end of the Reaganomics bargain. The "Reagan revolution" was supposed to reduce the size of government *and* increase private investment and savings. To that end, the effective tax rates paid by the top one percent were reduced by almost 25 percent. (Now the top one percent of families gets as much income after taxes as the bottom 40 percent.) But from 1981 to 1988, the United States had the highest rate of consumption and the lowest rates of savings and investment of any industrial country except the U.K. And within the private consumption bundle, the fastest growing single category has been consumer durables, especially luxury goods. The rich have been "investing" in motor yachts, antiques, third cars, and fourth homes, not in the technical innovations necessary to improve our lagging productivity growth—the key to our economic strength.

Of course, the middle and upper-middle classes also spend capriciously at times, and it's certainly true that an across-the-board tax on consumption could also be expected to encourage savings and thereby spur investment and raise the low rate of productivity growth. But most consumption taxes are regressive: they're higher (as a percentage of income) at the lower income levels, where the least amount of superfluous consumption takes place. A consumption tax on the rich, in contrast, is consistent with the progressive ideals that are supposed to guide our tax system. What's more, since the rich favor fancy imported cars, high fashion, and Swiss watches, such a tax would also help cut our trade deficit. And since George Bush has vowed to create a "kinder, gentler" America, what better way for him inevitably to break his no new taxes pledge than by reversing the growing regressiveness of our tax system?

THERE ARE two basic ways to collect a consumption tax on the rich. One would be to tax specific goods consumed mainly by them. For example, the Dutch impose a 45 percent tax on high-priced cars, and a 33 percent tax on caviar. The French have a 33 percent tax on caviar, perfume, furs, jewelry, photographic equipment, and high-priced televisions.

These luxury excise taxes are not without problems. Few would disagree that a Ferrari and a $225,000 Russian lynx coat are luxuries. But what about Volvos and brandy? Also, it does little good to tax a narrow range of luxury goods if people just substitute some luxuries for others. The list approach only works well with items that the rich find it hard to do without.

Our own conservative estimates of the size of the most important luxury goods markets (new cars over $20,000, for example) show that they will account for nearly $120 billion in sales this year—more than a fifth of all consumer durables. So even allowing for some demand switching, a 33 percent tax on high-end art auctions and new luxury cars, boats, planes, jewelry, watches, and furs would easily bring in $10 billion—roughly a third of this year's deficit reduction target.

Such a tax would be relatively easy to introduce and administer, and as a bonus would reach drug dealers and

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tax evaders. But to get at other items in the upscale consumption budget, and to concentrate most heavily on the very rich, we also propose a more comprehensive version of the luxury tax. This is a variation on the "progressive expenditure tax" that was suggested several years ago by the Nobel laureate J. E. Meade. Our version of the PET would affect only the top 900,000 taxpayers, the folks who have benefited most from Reaganomics, as well as from the weird anomaly in the 1986 tax reform that actually makes marginal tax rates on the upper-middle class higher than on the very rich.

Our proposal is to levy a special tax on the entire portion of their income devoted to consumption. They would continue to pay income taxes at the current marginal rates (only 28 percent, for most of them). In addition, they'd pay a surcharge on their "consumption," which would be calculated quite simply as income minus savings. (Income would include not just ordinary income and realized capital gains, but also such sources of funds as loans, gifts, inheritances, and depreciation. Savings would include each year's net investments in financial assets, pension funds, and other "qualified" assets. Some portion of spending on education might also be deductible.)

How might such a tax perform in revenue terms? We estimate that right now these top 900,000 taxpayers and their families are *consuming* at least $180 billion a year—an average of more than $200,000 per household. One variant of our plan would exempt the first $75,000 and apply a 20 percent tax to the balance. If savings behavior remained unchanged, this would raise at least $25 billion. The second, more radical, proposal would be to exempt the first $100,000 of household consumption and take 33 percent of what's left over. With unchanged savings behavior this would raise about $30 billion to $40 billion a year. Together with excise taxes on a very limited range of big-ticket luxuries, this PET surcharge could wipe out nearly half the deficit.

Of course, the assumption in the above calculations—that savings behavior would remain unchanged—is almost surely false. So the revenue take would be somewhat smaller. But that's OK. Because the more the savings behavior changes, the more fully the tax has succeeded in boosting savings, therefore investment, and therefore productivity growth—one of its central purposes.

Various Democrats are now vying to come up with new ways for George Bush to renege ignominiously on his no-new-taxes pledge. They want to tinker with income tax rates, or put another cap on home interest deduction, or increase the tax on Social Security benefits, or end interest deductions for LBOs, or increase very general excise taxes on liquor, gasoline, and tobacco. Absent from this eclectic menu is any guiding vision of what the Democrats stand for and whose interests are being served.

Rather than attack our own constituencies with regressive excise taxes, progressives should rally around a tax program that is at once more explicitly redistributional *and* pro-growth. Our goal is a society of hardworking people who are free to prosper, but are also expected to invest in their nation's future. That means bringing the tiny fraction of Americans breathing the rarefied Hamptons air back down to earth.

JAMES S. HENRY AND MARSHALL POMER

James S. Henry is an economist and lawyer in New York who has written extensively about the underground economy. Marshall Pomer is a California economist who has written widely on social mobility.

Mr. Smith goes to freshman orientation.

CAPITOL HILLBILLY

HERE IS Ben Jones, newly elected congressman from Georgia, commenting on the Washington dinner circuit after his first week in the capital: "If I never see another Swedish meatball, it'll be OK with me." Here is Barney Frank, five-term congressman from Massachusetts, on the same subject: "All receptions are total horseshit."

Someday, after years of seasoning, maybe Jones will be as eloquently cynical as Frank. For now, though, he's the official yokel of the 101st Congress. Not only is Jones a good old boy from the South; he is a former actor whose career climax came playing that very role—as Cooter, the good-hearted greasy mechanic who was always rescuing Bo and Luke Duke in the CBS series "The Dukes of Hazzard."

That's not to say Jones hasn't been around the block a time or two. He prevailed in one of the most ad hominem congressional campaigns of 1988. In the course of the campaign, he released a lengthy police record—acquired during his drinking days and including a battery charge by his former wife—to pre-empt any use of it by his opponent. But even amid vicious mudslinging, Jones managed to come off as a good old boy. When his opponent, Republican incumbent Pat Swindall, questioned his honesty, Jones alluded to the fact that Swindall had recently been indicted for perjury: "Being called a liar by Pat Swindall is like being called ugly by a possum." Jones beat Swindall by 20 points.

Jones's first step toward becoming a jaded veteran was taken in December, when he went through the standard orientation for newcomers to Congress, a 14-day crash course organized by the House Administration committee. Together with his 32 classmates, Jones sat through a seemingly endless series of presentations, on topics both mundane and meaningful. In Washington and in Cambridge, where the new members convened for a six-day "issues orientation," he was schmoozed, fed, lobbied, and lectured. Like most orientations, this one had a high percentage of seemingly pointless moments. But, also like most orientations, it succeeded in spite of itself. It gave

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Jones a rough overview of the next two years and put him more closely in touch with the forces that will be governing his behavior.

JONES ARRIVED in Washington with no plans to "take this place by storm and change the world." What he wanted most was "to get settled," he said. "Set up an office that functions efficiently, [learn] the practical things that a congressman does—turning the mail around quickly, things like that." Freshman orientation caters to such concerns. One of the first events on his calendar was a seminar titled "Setting Up Your Congressional Office."

Most of orientation was closed to the media. Officials said they did this to "encourage candid discussion" and ensure "total honesty"—and to keep the sessions safe for stupidity. "We don't want some guy quoted as asking, 'Who's the Speaker?' " said one organizer. He might have worried less about inquisitiveness and more about boredom. Even Jones, one of the more earnest in the group, played hooky a few times. ("I knew a lot of this stuff already," he explained. "When I was a kid, I used to read the Congressional Record every day.") At the seminar about congressional offices, several freshmen were as restless as kindergartners at nap time: they whispered to each other, manicured their nails, excused themselves to get another doughnut.

The next presentation, sponsored by the Democratic Study Group, was more lively. Three sitting congressmen were sharing their "candid" views about the coming budget crunch. It turned out they weren't worried so much about the deficit as about whether they or the Republicans were going to get blamed for it. When the question-and-answer period started, one freshman took issue with this approach. "It seems to me there's enough blame to go around," he said. His elders seemed a bit taken aback, but quickly rebounded. "Don't think of this as a budget problem," said one. "Think of it as a political problem, because that's what it is."

The second day of orientation opened with a sermon from Representative Joe Kolter, a smarmy four-term Democrat from Pennsylvania. "The honeymoon is over," he warned. "You've basked in the glory of victory; now let's talk about survival." He suggested that freshmen keep one thing in mind while pondering vexing public policy issues: "Two years down the road, your opponent's gonna have something to chew on—your voting record." Older members regaled Jones and his classmates with tales of battles past. One spoke of the first time he got up to address a committee hearing. "As soon as I stood up, one of the senior members of the committee said, 'Sit down, you smartass young punk.' So I turned to him and said, 'Shut up, you senile old bastard.' " Another listed the three most important things to do to get re-elected: "Use the frank. Use the frank. And use the frank."

One week into orientation, the freshmen made their pilgrimage to the Mecca of policy analysis, Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. One of the first day's featured speakers was Alice Rivlin, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former director of the Congressional Budget Office. Unlike the House budget experts back in Washington, Rivlin didn't try to lay the blame on anybody. Instead, she spoke of "having a substantial surplus in the unified budget by the end of the '90s," and the need for high levels of investment "for the next several decades." Since most freshmen were just learning how to think in two-year cycles, this caused some confusion. Rivlin was barraged with questions. How could Congress possibly institute a five-year budget plan? Or even a two-year plan? What exactly is the "unified budget," anyway? Jones said he found Rivlin's talk helpful—"every bit of knowledge is useful"—but his colleagues in the room seemed rattled.

The rest of the week's meetings were off-limits to the media, and the Kennedy School's well-trained press shepherds gently nudged us out of the room. On the whole, said Jones, the Harvard program gave "a nice overview" of the issues and was "delightful." Why? It wasn't so much the encyclopedic commentary on matters of importance, the 20-odd seminars on everything from AIDS policy to the problems of sub-Saharan Africa. No, it was something less tangible than that, something that turned Jones downright poetic. "We were spending whole days together," he said. "Going to classes during the day, socializing together at night. We really got to know each other. . . . And then, you know, it was Christmastime, and a little snow was falling in Harvard Square, and we've just been treated royally. It's been a special time."

BESIDES digesting all the information served up during orientation, Jones had to begin setting up his office. He was getting scores of letters and phone calls every day, but he had only one staffer with him in Washington. The two of them had to contend with the swarms of eager job seekers who roamed the corridors of Capitol Hill like Hare Krishnas at airports, smiling earnestly and handing out résumés. Jones was also in demand among the media, and hardly a day passed without an interview. By the end of the second week, he had hired a few more assistants and submitted his choices in the freshman office lottery. (He got a cramped attic on the fifth floor.) He still hadn't found a site for his permanent district office, or a place to live in Washington.

One leitmotiv that ran through orientation was the matter of re-election. Not that Jones—or anyone else in Congress—needed reminding. Even before he was sworn in, Jones was working on two different fund-raisers, in Washington and in Atlanta. To get re-elected, one congressman had said, it was necessary to "be a district man," and Jones took that advice to heart. He said his primary goal for the next two years is "to provide the best constituent services this district's ever had." He plans to have a mobile office roam his district, and he rattled on endlessly about answering "every piece of mail."

As for the Swedish meatballs: during orientation, Jones attended a reception practically every night. Most of these free meals weren't exactly free; those dishing them out (and those eating them) had ulterior menus. For example, Repre-

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sentative Bill Gray, who gave a "do," as Jones calls them, wanted to win the caucus chair (he did). And the incoming Democrats dutifully attended three receptions put on by the House triumvirate of Speaker Jim Wright, Majority Leader Tom Foley, and Whip Tony Coelho, all of whom stressed the importance of party unity. The reasons for heeding party elders, though not what they once were, are still substantial. Jones received some $17,000 from the party during his campaign, and he stands to be rewarded with another tidy sum in 1990. Well-behaved freshmen also win better committee assignments. Though Jones conceded that "pickings were slim" for a freshman, he wanted places on the Veterans Affairs and Public Works and Transportation committees. His home district borders Atlanta—"which is *about* transportation" and has a sizable veteran population and a VA hospital. When the positions were doled out in early January, Jones got what he wanted.

Another prominent presence at these orientation meals were lobbyists. Jones met with representatives from Coca-Cola, Lockheed, and "a whole bunch of other people. They all just want you to remember who they are," he said. One group Jones remembers fondly is the National Abortion Rights Action League, a major contributor to his campaign. (Down the campaign homestretch, Jones was getting more than half his money from PACs.) He thanked NARAL personally at one of its meetings. "I happen to agree with their point of view," he said. To most of the other lobbyists he met, Jones said, he told the same thing: "I can't promise you anything but an open door and an open mind."

Basically, orientation was one long schmooze. Jones didn't come away with wondrous new insights into the workings of government, or carefully reconsidered stances on crucial issues. Nor did he discover any secret formulas for legislative success. What he did gain were some helpful hints on getting re-elected, acquaintance with some key players, a sense for the congressional mind-set, and—perhaps through osmosis—a more political way of being. After he had listened to the three candidates for Democratic caucus chair give their speeches, I asked Jones which one he supported. "Well, they were all impressive in their own way." He paused. "Boy, that really sounded like a politician talking, didn't it?" As Barney Frank might say: No shit.

MICHAEL NEWMAN

The land-based missile problem, solved!

TRIAD, SCHMIAD

IT WAS 20 years ago—January 1969—that the Soviet Union first tested an intercontinental ballistic missile with multiple warheads. Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard was the first American official to voice publicly the ominous implications:

> If they give the SS-9 three individually guided warheads with high accuracy and high yield—which they are fully capable of doing—then they triple their threat to Minuteman [missiles] and remove our confidence that that portion of our deterrent can survive in adequate numbers. This is a danger which we cannot ignore.

Thus was born the central problem of American strategic planning for the past two decades: the vulnerability of our land-based missiles, which form one of the three retaliatory legs (along with sea-based and air-based nuclear weapons) that we count on to deter a Soviet nuclear strike. It's a problem that four presidents, six secretaries of defense, dozens of senators, hundreds of generals, and thousands of analysts have so far proved unable to solve.

The fall of Phnom Penh and Saigon, skyjackings and hostage takings, the fall of the dollar and the greenhouse effect, the crack epidemic—to hear some people tell it, you'd think all of this and more was due to Minuteman's vulnerability. In 1980 Norman Podhoretz said with a straight face that Iranian militants would never have dared seize the American Embassy in Tehran had all three legs of our triad been secure.

THESE DAYS few people believe that the problem is quite that consequential. But the search for a solution goes on. It will be taken up early in the Bush administration, which will choose between two competing solutions: (*a*) hundreds of small, mobile, one- or two-warhead Midgetman missiles (price tag: upward of $30 billion); or (*b*) tens of large, mobile, ten-warhead MX missiles (about half that price). Reflection on the last 20 years of vulnerability suggests that neither of these options makes sense, and that a much cheaper solution is available.

All told, 50, 60, maybe 70 basing schemes for a Minuteman replacement have been explored. Billions of dollars have been spent, bringing jobs to thousands of engineers and technicians, profits to defense industry stockholders, and foundation grants to scores of thinkers from Palo Alto to Capitol Hill. The search has not been without its amusements. One of my personal favorites was the plan to deploy new missiles in the Western deserts of the United States, each on an asterisk configuration of railroad track. At the end of each leg of each asterisk, tens of miles long, would be a hardened concrete garage. Each missile would sit in normal times on its launcher in the center of its asterisk. But upon being warned of a Soviet attack, the missile would automatically select one leg of the asterisk, charge down the track, and hide in the garage. I always picture one of Herblock's scowling H-bombs, looking furtively around before slamming the garage door behind it.

Other proposals were less charming, but they had their compensations. During the Ford administration, for example, there was the plan to base the MX, already designated Minuteman's successor, in tunnels dozens of miles long; the missiles would cruise up and down the tunnels continuously, ready for launch at a number of points. The scheme was so ambitious that a special machine had to be invented

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for digging the tunnels. The idea was dropped when an analyst realized that a nuclear blast anywhere in the neighborhood could shift the earth sufficiently to make firing the missile impossible.

Then there was Jimmy Carter's "race track" scheme, involving the paving of large parts of Utah and Nevada. This plan had the misfortune of antagonizing the constituents of Senator Paul Laxalt. After junking the race track at Laxalt's behest, the Reagan administration had to work long and hard to find an alternative. The first idea was called "Dense-pack" (dunce-pack, to its detractors). This plan would have deployed the MX in silos, like Minuteman, but would have placed the silos very close together. Then, if all went well, the first incoming Soviet warhead to detonate would wipe out its fellow incoming warheads, an effect labeled "fratricide." Few people ever took Dense-pack seriously; it sounded good in theory, but testing the theory posed practical difficulties.

The Reagan administration also toyed with the idea of burying the MX miles beneath granite mountains, where the missiles would be able to ride out wave after wave of Soviet attacks. When the smoke cleared, the missiles would be programmed to rise to the surface, a process that might take days if not weeks, and, like avenging angels, automatically launch themselves against the attacker. The scheme satisfied the requirements of deterrence, but the missiles would have been useless for fighting nuclear wars, and the idea was dropped. Instead, the Air Force began to develop a rail-mobile launcher for MX. At least 50 missiles would ride on special trains, normally kept on military bases but "flushed" during crises to cruise the nation's rail system.

THE ALTERNATIVE to this, the Midgetman, was invented early in the 1980s by Les Aspin, Al Gore, and a few other Democratic defense experts who decided that their party, long opposed to the MX, needed a missile to love. The Midgetman soon became the missile of choice among defense intellectuals. The two proposals have competed for funds ever since, a mainly partisan struggle between Congress and the executive branch.

It was into this debate that Michael Dukakis blithely waltzed last year, with the chutzpah to oppose not only MX, but also Midgetman. Why deploy any new ICBM, he asked during the primaries? Don't we have enough warheads on our eminently survivable bombers and submarine-based missiles to deter nuclear war? Questions like these brought the wrath of the conventional wisdom thundering about his head and shoulders. Although Dukakis eventually came around and pledged a replacement for the Minuteman (some mysterious alternative system that, though allegedly known to the Pentagon, could not be described publicly), it was too little too late. When the *Washington Post* decided not to endorse either presidential candidate, it was apparently Dukakis's lack of passion for Midgetman that had proved his undoing.

The fact that Minuteman vulnerability has persisted for 20 years gives one pause. Could it be that this reflects certain unalterable trends, a combination of technological capabilities and the geographic, sociological, and political constraints on America's strategic choices? The point is that there is no good way for this country to maintain a survivable ICBM force. Neither the rail-mobile MX nor the Midgetman is likely to prove viable. And neither will any other convoluted scheme. Our citizens are too protective of the nation's limited remaining open space, and too frightened of nuclear weapons, to lend support to mobile basing schemes. From sea to shining sea, no one wants nuclear-armed missiles in the neighborhood, especially if they are going to be cruising along the roads or the Amtrak rails. Instead of continuing to ignore these real and stubborn constraints on ICBM deployments, it is time we turned to alternative means of achieving the purposes of the strategic forces.

TO BEGIN WITH, we should ask whether the vulnerability of land-based missiles is really much of a problem. It has never been clear why deterrence required three types of strategic forces, each capable, independently, of surviving an attack and retaliating. Why not a two-legged strategic force, or a four-legged one? The important thing is to be confident—or, more precisely, for the Soviets to be confident—that a large number of U.S. warheads would survive any first-strike on their part and wreak unacceptable destruction on the U.S.S.R. How much destruction? That is the crucial question that is left conveniently unclear by so many alarmists. Even if Soviet ICBMs worked perfectly and our entire ground-based force were annihilated, we would still have more than 10,000 warheads in our air- and sea-based arsenals.

The objection usually voiced at this point in the discussion is that our submarines may also someday become vulnerable to Soviet attack. This threat has long lived in strategic planners' closet of horrors. If there is a basis in fact for such a threat, however, it's been the best-kept secret in Washington. Besides, we could reduce the submarines' potential vulnerability by deploying more, cheaper subs with fewer missiles on each, thus increasing the number of targets that the enemy would have to detect and attack. And anyway, what if all our submarines were miraculously destroyed? We'd be left with thousands of nuclear bombs and airborne missile warheads—including, before long, some carried by purportedly undetectable Stealth aircraft.

Even once we decide that ground-based missiles needn't be at the core of our deterrent, important uses for them remain. ICBMs have the unique ability to execute discrete and precise strikes, flexibly and reliably. Thinking about the unthinkable, one can imagine situations in which we would want the president to have the option of striking a very small number of targets in a hostile country with as much confidence and precision as can be mustered. Given current technologies, submarine-based missiles cannot be used for such missions, at least not with as much confidence, and the use of bombers could introduce unwanted dimensions into a crisis. The United States should retain a substantial number of ICBMs for this purpose; the

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50 MXs already deployed in fixed silos and a portion of the existing Minuteman III missiles could serve admirably into the next century.

This force would not be intended to play a role in deterring a large-scale attack on this country or our allies, nor be expected to survive such an attack. That would be made clear, publicly and explicitly. The size of our bomber and submarine forces could be expanded, if necessary, to compensate for the declared subtraction of ICBM capabilities. The bomber force should be modernized with the B-2, and with stealthy cruise missiles to be carried by B-1s and B-52s. The planned force of *Ohio*-class submarines carrying Trident II missiles might be supplemented with less expensive submarines.

There is only one logical objection to this plan. If one is contemplating fighting protracted nuclear wars, or launching one's own pre-emptive nuclear attack, a modern force of large and survivable ICBMs is a must. Their speed and accuracy, their secure and reliable communications, and their targeting flexibility make them the weapon of choice for nuclear war-fighters. In the end, the arguments for modernizing the ICBM force have more to do with plans to fight nuclear wars than with a desire to deter them. But fighting large-scale nuclear wars and launching pre-emptive strikes are strategic capabilities that this nation should have no use for.

Somehow, the country has survived for 20 years with vulnerable ICBMs. We've even had a few laughs along the way, and made a buck or two. We've stood tall, at times, and become the envy of the rest of the world. Maybe it's time to declare the Minuteman problem solved. My children will never know the tranquillity of having invulnerable land-based missiles; like the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Automat, this delight will repose only in the memories of my generation. But at least they can see an end to this endless debate, and to the billions we have thrown into the fruitless quest.

Given the pressure on the defense budget, the new administration is likely to endorse President Reagan's decision to kill the Midgetman program. If Congress is wise, it will not only let the recommendation stand, but return the favor by killing the rail-mobile MX. It's long past time to turn the page.

BARRY BLECHMAN

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Bush's most urgent policy problem.

THE TWO BLACK AMERICAS

BY MORTON M. KONDRACKE

THE NEWS from black America—what you read in your newspaper and see on television—is almost always bad. It isn't wrong, either. The portion of blacks living in poverty in 1987, 33 percent, was three times the white rate and was higher than in 1969. Forty-five percent of black children are poor, compared with 15 percent of white children. Blacks constitute 12 percent of the U.S. population, but they made up 46 percent of the inmates in U.S. prisons in 1985 and 60 percent of those arrested for murder in U.S. cities in 1987. The national crime figures for 1988 almost surely will be even worse, thanks largely to drugs. Inner-city cocaine wars helped raise the murder rate in Washington, D.C., by 65 percent last year, even as the city's black mayor was discovered consorting with a drug suspect, yet again.

Of young black men aged 20 to 24 who weren't in school—those who should be just beginning their working careers—17 percent worked not at all during 1987, at least not in the regular economy. A dispute has raged for nearly a decade now over whether, as liberals contend, these men are "structurally unemployed," meaning that jobs in the modern economy increasingly require education and skills they don't have; or whether, as conservatives believe, these men are products of an "underclass culture," where honest work is not valued because hustling, drug dealing, and theft pay better—and where, anyway, people lack even the minimal tools for employment, such as punctuality, courtesy, and elementary verbal skills. The latest evidence seems to favor the second theory: even as the overall economy approaches full employment, and positions in fast-food restaurants and construction companies go unfilled, the black unemployment rate remains in double digits, at 11.6 percent, and the black teenage rate hovers at 30 percent. And these numbers don't count those "not in the work force"—i.e., not looking for jobs.

The good news you occasionally hear from black America is also accurate. Depressing aggregate statistics conceal significant success stories among middle- and upper-class blacks. Nearly ten percent of black families had incomes

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above $50,000 (in real dollars) in both 1986 and 1987, the highest percentage ever. The average black family in which both husband and wife work now makes 88 percent of the income of a similar white family, when taxes and government benefits are taken into account.

AND YET, even within the black middle class, all is not right. Although middle-class blacks have seen their fortunes rise markedly since the Reagan recovery began in 1982, most are still not back to the levels of the late 1970s, before the Reagan recession. The median income for blacks in 1987 was 57.1 percent of that for whites, lower than in any year of the 1970s. Besides, gains in income are diluted by the fact that, as the Urban League's John Jacob puts it, most blacks, lacking a large savings, "are 26 weeks away from poverty." In 1984 the median net worth of black households was just $3,397, *nine percent* of the white average. Finally, the source of much black middle-class income is in some ways ominous. Fully half of all black managers and professionals are government workers, while the more lucrative jobs in private business are overwhelmingly white. Black business executives tend to be disproportionately lodged in equal-employment opportunity and community-relations posts, and are disproportionately laid off in corporate restructurings.

The prospects for improvement in these trends are clouded by the decline in the fraction of black high school graduates going on to college, from 34 percent in 1976 to 26 percent in 1985, a numerical drop of 15,000 students. The 1980s shift in federal aid from grants to loans seems partly responsible—and suggests one of the many steps George Bush could take to bolster black America. Only 42 percent of those who do go to college graduate. The days are long gone when a high school degree was a ticket out of poverty; 27 percent of black high school graduates were poor in 1987. (And bear in mind, the poverty line is $9,000 per year for a family of three, and life even well above that is scarcely "middle class.") Despite affirmative action, there has also been a decline in the number of black college graduates who go on to graduate and professional studies. All of this bodes especially ill in view of the growing demand for scientifically literate workers.

Much of the anecdotal evidence from the black middle class is also dispiriting. When Jesse Jackson proposed that blacks henceforth be officially called "African-Americans," black columnist William Raspberry found it evidence of "despair" and a "renewed sense of our outsidedness." Raspberry says that the black middle class "feels tenuous about its middle-classedness," fearful that its kids may get dragged into drugs and crime, and also senses "a new line of racism popping up" as evidenced in the Howard Beach incident, various outbreaks of racial hostility on college campuses, and the continued failure of blacks and whites to have much to do with each other outside work. Census studies show that residential segregation is diminishing for Asians and Hispanics, but hardly at all for blacks, even the middle class.

There certainly is hope to be found in the fact that blacks are achieving a new level of prominence, and yet even this is not unalloyed. A sharecropper's son, Jesse Jackson, finished second in the Democratic presidential race last year and may be front-runner for the 1992 nomination. Three hundred cities have black mayors. Toni Morrison, a black author, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction last year. But an argument could be made that at least some of this is tokenism, an expression of unease about the overall slow rate of progress for blacks. And there is an obvious downside to the growing number of black mayors: they win elections largely because black voters can't afford to follow white voters in fleeing the cities.

BUT WHATEVER troubles beset the black middle class, they are mild compared with those afflicting the underclass, which is relatively small, but by all indications is growing and deepening in its social pathology. It is hard to say how big it is, since statistical definitions of it are highly arbitrary. By one geographic definition, it's estimated that about 2.5 million people live in the most poverty-ridden census tracts of U.S. industrial cities. By one income definition, it's estimated that about four million blacks have lived for ten years below the poverty line. A slightly larger number, 4.3 million, lived in 1987 in families that could be termed "the poorest of the poor"—with an income below $4,528, half the poverty level. Either estimate could be low because of chronic undercounting of the poor, but either way, analysts put the size of the underclass at no more than 15 percent of the nation's 29 million blacks, and usually less.

By all accounts, though, the underclass is growing as a percentage of all blacks, and by most accounts it is growing in absolute terms. The source of the growth is not precisely clear: to what extent are more blacks being absorbed into the underclass as they become poorer and are caught up in the culture of illegitimacy, drugs, and joblessness, and to what extent are children simply being born into the underclass and failing to escape? The two are interconnected. One thing that a hard core of idle young men seem willing and able to do is have sex with poor young women, who—for reasons that are in dispute—often choose to have babies and not marry.

The problem actually is not that the rate of such births is growing. Black teens, for example, are having babies at a lower rate than they did in 1970 or 1980 (though still at a depressing rate). Rather, the problem is that births in the black underclass are growing as a percentage of black births. Especially significant is the collapse of the birth rate among married, middle-class black women (due partly to a soaring abortion rate). During the 12 months ending in mid-1987, black married women with incomes over $15,000 had fewer than 165,000 babies. During the same period, black unwed women with household incomes under $10,000 (including welfare and other government transfer payments) had 177,000 babies. Last year 61 percent of all black babies were born to unwed mothers. Nearly 25 years after Daniel Patrick Moynihan was pilloried for saying so, it is universally accepted that black poverty is heavily the result of family breakdown.

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Children's Defense Fund president Marian Wright Edelman, for example, says that the illegitimacy rate "practically guarantees the poverty of the next generation of black children." At present rates, she says, it will be less than ten years before more than half of all black children are living in poverty. Edelman just got back from a trip to Atlanta, where she found that half of the babies in the neonatal unit of a huge city hospital were drug-addicted, and where workers in a day-care center for homeless children discovered a four-year-old performing oral sex on a three-year-old and were not surprised. "That's what the kids see in the shelters," she said. "We are creating a new kind of monster there."

Besides abysmal education, illegitimacy, welfare-dependency, unemployment, bad housing, insufficient health care, and crime, the black underclass is being raked by drugs and AIDS, and an upsurge in child abuse connected to drug addiction. The director of one Boston-area settlement house says that the incidence of child sexual abuse in underclass families—black and white—is "nearly 100 percent." There was a 28 percent increase in the number of child abuse deaths reported between 1985 and 1986.

HOW THE underclass developed and what should be done about it are two of the most fiercely contested issues in social science and public policy. There are basically three schools of thought—the "welfare school" led by conservative Charles Murray of the Manhattan Institute, the "structural unemployment/social isolation" school led by black liberal Professor William Julius Wilson of the University of Chicago, and the "culture of poverty" school led by Professor Glenn Loury of Harvard, a black who is either a neoliberal or a conservative, depending on who's labeling him and the nuances of his most recent pronouncements.

Murray, the darling of the Reagan right, argued in the 1984 book *Losing Ground* that liberal policies of the 1960s—notably increases in social spending, loosening of welfare regulations, Warren Court crime rulings, and the lowering of academic standards and discipline in public schools—encouraged young ghetto women to have babies, destroyed the work ethic, made crime pay, and made it harder for poor blacks to learn their way out of poverty. At the heart of Murray's argument was the observation that the percentage of black babies born to unmarried women began its steep climb in the mid-1960s, coinciding with the acceleration of social spending. In 1960, 22 percent of all black babies were born to unwed mothers; in 1970, the figure was 35 percent; in 1980, 55 percent. (For whites, the corresponding figures were two percent, six, and 11.)

Liberals claim that subsequent research, especially by Harvard's David Ellwood, has exploded Murray's thesis by demonstrating that illegitimacy continued to climb in the 1970s and 1980s even though welfare benefits failed to keep pace with inflation, and by showing that there is no state-by-state correlation between out-of-wedlock births and welfare levels. Murray now says what he really meant all along was that welfare, Medicaid, and other benefits enabled (rather than caused) ghetto girls to have children and no jobs and still get by, which they did.

Liberals prefer William Julius Wilson's thesis—advanced in the 1987 book *The Truly Disadvantaged*—that the deindustrialization of the American economy, which started in the early 1970s, and the movement of available jobs to the suburbs left unskilled young ghetto males increasingly unemployable and undesirable as prospects for marriage. According to an earlier Wilson book, *The Declining Significance of Race*, the ability of stable, middle-class and working-class blacks to move out of the inner city left the ghettos increasingly occupied by the poor and the unemployed. So "the communities of the underclass are plagued by massive joblessness, flagrant and open lawlessness, and low-achieving schools . . . the residents of these areas, whether women and children of welfare families or aggressive street criminals, have become increasingly socially isolated from mainstream patterns of behavior."

Wilson's description of a self-perpetuating hell in the modern ghetto is not much different from that advanced by the "culture of poverty" school, but Loury thinks that both Wilson and Murray put too much emphasis on economic determinism and not enough on a breakdown of values in the ghetto and the failure of prominent blacks to help restore them. "Status is awarded for dope-dealing and for a woman to say, 'I'm a mother now,' " said Loury. "There are no centers of authority, public or private, saying, 'No, wait. What it means to be cool is not this.' "

William Raspberry agrees. He says prominent blacks who command the attention of ghetto kids have reinforced "the sense that there's no future for them, nothing worth postponing pleasure for. . . . I think we'd be much better to say, 'A lot can happen to you.' That is what we say to our own flesh and blood." The problem, Raspberry says, is that influential blacks naturally try to foster sympathy for the underclass, especially among policy-makers. Loury thinks Jesse Jackson is a good example of the resulting contradiction. "On the one hand, he preaches values in his exhortations that 'we can transform ourselves if we but will.' On the other hand, he wants to blame the callous Reagan administration and the retreat of government for our problems. One mode of rhetoric tends to crowd out the other. I've yet to hear him resolve the tension between them."

THIS SAME PROBLEM—the perniciousness of the victim-of-society mentality, however well grounded in fact it may be—afflicts some in the middle class. According to Loury, "race is really very important" in the lives of successful blacks, who feel that "the vicissitudes of life, the slights, the failure to get a job or the rude word from a supervisor, all are due to race. Success has not brought relief from that sense of doubt, that mild sense of paranoia." Loury says he finds the tendency widespread among black college students. "These kids feel embattled. They carry this anger." He suspects this attitude may be unwittingly fostered by college administrators "who respond to every complaint by showing how sympathetic they are."

Which of the three schools of thought has it right? Probably all of them, in some measure. Murray and Wilson

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seem to have valid explanations for the underclass culture that Loury laments: the perverse incentives of the welfare system and the desertion of the cities by heavy industry, along with their desertion by more affluent blacks, conspired to help create the culture of poverty. It's certain, of course, that raw racism played a part, and it's likely that it continues to. Given the choice of hiring a black male from the ghetto or somebody else, many white employers may well choose somebody else. The danger, as the culture of poverty deepens, is that this increasingly will be a sound economic decision on their part.

SO WHAT'S to be done about the black underclass? As a "thought experiment," Murray proposed in *Losing Ground* "scrapping the entire federal welfare and income-support structure for working-aged persons, including AFDC, Medicaid, food stamps, unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, subsidized housing, disability insurance, and the rest." He said, "It would leave the working-aged person with no recourse whatever except the job market, family members, friends, and public or private locally funded services. It is the Alexandrian solution: cut the knot, for there is no way to untie it."

Murray says he never really meant that, and knew it was politically unrealistic. His point, he says, is that no one knows how really to help the underclass and that federal efforts often end up doing more harm than good. Murray thinks that the continuing idleness among ghetto men during the economic recovery shows that lack of jobs is not their problem. "A different reality has been out there all along, it has been resolutely ignored, and it is finally beginning to intrude," Murray wrote last September in *Commentary*. "Liberals will increasingly be hearing themselves saying, 'Those people just don't want to work.' "

Murray thinks that drugs, AIDS, and crime are going to discourage even liberals from trying to solve the underclass problem, and make them settle for containment—establishing what he calls "custodial democracy" in which the poor simply will be provided with medical care, food, housing, and other social services "much as we currently do for American Indians who live on reservations."

If that's where things are heading, fortunately they have not arrived there yet. Liberals such as Wilson and Edelman still are proposing major programs to employ, educate, and otherwise help the underclass. Edelman's annual Children's Defense Budget contains programs in education, family planning, child care, job training, and employment to help the poor. Wilson says that increases in black male employment in Boston's tight labor market indicate that economic growth can help blacks, and he says that a new survey of 2,500 ghetto residents in Chicago indicates that they would work if they could find jobs, but are cut off from information about where the jobs are. "There is no absence of a work ethic," he said. He also cited a new University of Chicago study showing that a ghetto man who is employed is twice as likely to marry the mother of his children as one who is unemployed. Wilson doesn't deny that culture plays a role in keeping the underclass down, "but that's different from saying that these patterns are so deeply internalized that they won't respond to changed circumstances."

Loury says he favors an amalgam of liberal and conservative ideas—plus increased efforts by black authority figures and ordinary middle-class blacks to work with ghetto youngsters and inculcate middle-class values. There is talk of an expanded Head Start program, of kindergarten beginning at age three, and of various other attempts to get young poor blacks out of the house as early and often as possible and into a more constructive environment.

WHAT GEORGE BUSH can do will be limited by resources, and the crisis of the underclass is so great that probably nothing short of a spiritual renewal in black America would really solve the problem. (The Black Muslims, whatever else one thinks of them, do set crooked people straight. So does Alcoholics Anonymous.) Still, there are worthwhile public policy ideas around. Welfare re-reform is one, as proposed in these pages in 1986 by Mickey Kaus (see "The Work Ethic State," TNR, July 7, 1986), who calls for a synthesis of left and right that would provide both the carrot and the stick: guaranteed jobs and day care along with the elimination of welfare. Opinion has moved in this general direction of late, but only slowly. The "workfare" bill passed by Congress last year barely qualifies for the term. It requires work only if there is adequate state funding to provide guaranteed jobs and child care, and in most states there isn't. Someday, adequate funding will have to be provided.

Another idea is educational reform that would make every school a potential magnet school, giving ambitious ghetto parents the chance to transfer their children to good schools outside the neighborhood. The agenda of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Jack Kemp, Bush's poverty czar, includes tax breaks to attract jobs and industries to the ghetto, an increase in the earned income tax credit to help the working poor, and opportunities for public housing residents to buy their homes and run their housing projects as cooperatives. (See "The Poverty Thing" by Fred Barnes, TNR, January 30.) Clearly, Bush also should vigorously enforce anti-discrimination laws in a way that the Reagan Justice Department did not.

Finally, there is Bush's "thousand points of light" writ large. With presidential leadership—starting with the Bush family and the White House staff—every business, church, civic group, social organization, government office, and country club in America could be encouraged to tutor kids, adopt schools, fund settlement houses, staff recreation centers, and otherwise rescue the rescuable. Bush could do for voluntary service what John F. Kennedy did for public service, though the effort has to be sustained, lest tutoring become the equivalent of 50-mile hikes, the short-lived fad of Kennedy's era. Bush claimed during the presidential campaign that he was "haunted by the lives lived by the children of our inner cities." He now has a chance to ease his pain. He should light a million points of light, and build to ten million. □

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The perils of privatization.

FALSE PROFIT

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

NEXT MONTH the libertarian Cato Institute is holding a conference to discuss the privatization of money. As Milton Friedman says in a conference brochure, "Money is too important to be left to central bankers." Although even most conservatives would probably balk at taking coin out of the public realm, the idea of privatization is much in vogue in conservative circles. Supposedly, almost everything that the government does could work better if left to the private market, and no function, no matter how sovereign, is sacred. The Reagan administration sold billions of dollars worth of federal assets and introduced a variety of voucher and government-by-contract schemes. At the state and local level, fiscal pressures made it attractive to privatize a range of services, from ambulances to prison administration to garbage collection. The March 1988 report of the President's Commission on Privatization (slyly subtitled "Towards More Effective Government") called for stepped-up privatization of everything from air traffic control to Amtrak. Privatization appeals to the Bush administration, too, though more for budgetary reasons than ideological ones.

The case for privatization invites careful scrutiny. At bottom, the idea is based on the laissez-faire proposition that the market must be more efficient than the state. Yet liberals, perhaps even more than conservatives, share a strong interest in efficient, accountable government, since they rely on it to a greater degree. If the private sector can indeed deliver public services with greater efficiency, accountability, and choice, then privatization is worth considering.

One must begin by sorting out the several uses of the word. Most literally, privatization simply means turning over public enterprises to private industry. But this is a much bigger issue in Western Europe and South America, where direct government ownership of commercial enterprises has been more widespread than in the United States. For the most part, American privatization seeks to bring the private sector into public services. In their heart of hearts, the more libertarian of the privatizers also want government out of the business of providing health services, education, housing, retirement income, and so on. But obviously, pure privatization of such public responsibilities would not only introduce greater choice and competitiveness. It would simply place health and educational services beyond the reach of those without the resources to pay for them. Few privatizers are prepared to argue that case. As a result, the big push for privatization, U.S.-style, has been a drive for vouchers and contracts as substitutes for direct government services.

The Heritage Foundation's Stuart Butler has argued that privatization not only shrinks the state directly, by shedding government functions, but dismantles the constituency for government spending and substitutes a "mirror image coalition" made up of prospective contractors who have "the incentive to campaign hard for stepped-up privatization." Following his own advice, Butler has been featured at events sponsored by something called the Privatization Council, a lobbying group underwritten by contractors seeking more government business. The co-chairman of this body is Prescott Bush Jr., the president's brother.

The privatizers rely heavily on "public choice" theory, which holds that the polity can be best understood as just another marketplace, in which self-interested individuals maximize their satisfactions by demanding government spending. Ostensibly civic or public values are said to conceal narrow private interests. In public choice theory, government agencies are merely monopoly providers whose main goal is the enlargement of turf and the extraction of "monopoly rents," whose narrow interests overwhelm the general interest in keeping spending under reasonable control. As Harvard's Steven Kelman recently wrote in a convincing critique of public choice theory, "Common to all public choice writing is the conclusion that, while the pursuit of self-interest in the marketplace maximizes social welfare, pursuit of self-interest in the political marketplace produces catastrophe."

Even if one accepts this sanguine view of the market and the corollary pessimism about the competence of the polity, the obvious logical fallacy is the touching assumption that contractors are innocent of political influence. Contractors, however private, join the coalition not just for spending per se, but for inefficient spending. In practice, this turns out to be the weak link in the privatization argument. Privatization only changes the venue, not the public responsibility. And if government pays the freight, government necessarily has to police the contractor. Yet the more reach contractors have under a privatized system, the less capacity government is likely to retain. The claim of hopeless government incompetence becomes a convenient self-fulfilling prophesy. Pentagon weapons procurement is surely the longest-running refutation of the hypothesis that government supervision of contractors is efficient.

To examine the major cases of government by voucher

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and contract is to appreciate why privatization is no panacea. Take the Medicare program, which in effect uses both vouchers and contracts. Under Medicare, the citizen is free to shop around for a doctor or a hospital. The provider is then reimbursed by the government. Presumably, this enhances choice and puts medical providers under competitive discipline. But in order to damp down the inevitable inflation that results when government foots the bill for a commodity—health—whose demand is nearly infinite, a bewildering proliferation of regulations is necessary. The regulations attempt to contain costs by stipulating what the government will pay for particular procedures. But the dialectic of cost containment is anything but technical or politically neutral. It is in the financial self-interest of the medical industry to exert its considerable political power to minimize regulatory restraints, not to maximize efficiency. Public choice theory has it exactly backward. Under Medicare, the force for cost containment has been the public officials—and they are no match for a private sector bent on expansion of outlays.

Even worse, the current system diverts scarce medical resources from areas of genuine medical need to ones that can command reimbursement. This outcome is not the fruit of bad regulation, but the natural consequence of the dynamic tension between for-profit providers and government paymasters. Universal systems of health care that are less privatized turn out to be more efficient, in two respects. They have less wasteful administrative and regulatory overhead. And since foreign hospitals under universal health systems typically have annual budgets based on a given population rather than case-by-case reimbursement, they have no artificial incentive to deploy resources based on what is reimbursable. A comprehensive national system is not only more equitable, but more efficient, as well.

A SECOND general problem with government-by-contract is that the supposed ability of the government or the consumer to "shop around" among competing suppliers quickly erodes when the vendor gains a monopoly on knowledge specific to the task. In an extensive report titled "Purchase of Services: Can state government gain control?" the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, a conservative business-funded fiscal watchdog, lamented the fact that the political and technical power of vendors made effective supervision and cost containment all but impossible. State "agencies did not have the structural capacity to establish standards and expectations for programs, much less to monitor and evaluate them." The report went on to describe how large providers become oligopolies because government agencies grow dependent on them. If the vendor can restrain its greed, it can extract moderate monopoly rents indefinitely.

Vouchers, though they offer a wider choice of providers, often present similar problems. One delicate hypocrisy in the conservative argument for vouchers is the failure to acknowledge just how expensive a generalized voucher system would be. This is a kind of good cop/bad cop game: the conservatives touting the superiority of vouchers are never the same ones responsible for writing actual budgets. The Reagan administration was very high on housing vouchers, for the usual free market reasons—but funded them only at a fraction of the cost of the direct government housing programs that they were supposed to replace.

Moreover, voucher advocates have a naive view of the market power of consumers. Vouchers may work well enough in areas where there is an almost infinite supply of vendors and an abundance of the product—the best example here is food stamps, which is the rare voucher with buying power as good as cash. But in health, or education, or housing, the low-income buyer armed with a government voucher is typically in a hopelessly unequal bargaining position vis-à-vis the seller. In large cities with housing shortages, the family carrying a government housing voucher is a tenant of last resort. The landlord is doing the government a favor to take the voucher at all. In practice, such tenants do not end up with the same freedom of choice as other consumers; the government ends up subsidizing astronomical rents for poor quality housing; and the voucher, far from adding to the housing supply, only serves to tighten markets further and drive up costs. In some large cities, more than half of the voucher recipients could not find any suitable housing that would accept the voucher.

Proprietary trade schools offer another case against the alleged superiority of vouchers. Ironically, the most "entrepreneurial" sector of postsecondary education today is financed almost entirely by government funds. Fly-by-night technical schools can make a quick buck because federal law permits low-income students to use higher education grants to buy education at for-profit trade and technical schools. A $2,000 Pell Grant pays only a fraction of the tuition of a university, but all of the tuition of a storefront school of cosmetology or data entry. Government is not equipped to police all of these schools, nor is there the well-developed system of accreditation that exists at the university level. The result is that private entrepreneurs financed by vouchers profit from an immense waste of public funds.

THE THIRD basic problem with government by contract or voucher is that the nominal budgetary savings are often illusory. Take ambulances. Many suburban towns have "saved money" by shifting from tax-supported ambulances to private, contract ambulance companies. Big cities, with a much needier population, still typically run their own ambulances, generally at a substantial loss. The reason, however, has nothing to do with the greater efficiency of private ambulances. The suburbs can slough off ambulance service onto contractors because most of their residents have private health insurance or Medicare, which reimburses ambulance ven-

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dors at profitable rates. In big cities, many ambulance customers have only Medicaid, which reimburses at a far lower rate, or are too disorganized to have any insurance, and the city agency must absorb the entire cost. Not surprisingly, private ambulance companies avoid large cities. The greater "efficiency" of suburban ambulance privatization is mainly an accounting artifact.

Prisons also turn out to be disappointing candidates for privatization. Even aside from the issue of whether something as inherently public as coercive custody should be placed in private hands, there is little evidence that private prisons produce durable savings to the public purse. John Donahue, of Harvard's Kennedy School, reviewed the evidence on privatized prisons and concluded that prison administration does not lend itself to genuine competition for prison management contracts, because incumbent operators are "likely to become entrenched," and because "the enterprise of incarcerating people has relatively little scope for technical progress in trimming costs." In general, privatized prisons have demonstrated cost savings only by skimming the easier inmate populations, leaving the more difficult ones to the state.

Prisons, of course, suggest the more fundamental problem with privatization as a philosophy. As Paul Starr has written, "Privatization calls upon motives of private gain, weakening the grounds of authority and capacity to assert collective interests over more narrow ones." In a political democracy that is also a market economy, the polity offers a realm of choice based on one person/one vote, a criterion fundamentally different from that of the market economy. But democratic choice is no less a form of individual liberty than choice based on purchases in the marketplace. And when government, as the agent of the polity, offers all citizens the use of parks or schools, or prosecutes law breakers, it also signals membership in a political community with common public values that would be diminished by privatization.

TO BE SURE, it is reasonable to debate where the boundaries of market and polity lie. As Starr suggests, the instruments that were essential to bind together a polity in 1790 are not necessarily the same ones needed in the 1990s. The postal service, Starr observes, "no longer has the same practical and symbolic importance in knitting together the nation that it once did." Some elements of postal service are fair game for privatization, yet the pure market criterion of requiring all postal services to pay their own way would force a postal system to withdraw cheap universal service from small towns and rural areas. To that extent, a partial rationale for postal service as a function of the polity rather than the market remains.

As society changes, government should be able to add some functions, and shed others. For example, contract garbage collection, a great favorite of privatizers, often seems to save money without diminishing service (though fee-for-service trash pickup could erode universal sanitation in poor neighborhoods). In principle, one could imagine the careful introduction of market measures to improve the capacity and competence of the polity. Unfortunately, most of the American privatizers have as their ideological agenda not just "more effective government," but the goal of enlarging the market and shrinking the polity. In Sweden the social democratic government is in the process of introducing a variety of marketlike devices into public agencies. For example, the state labor market board, which provides grants for worker retraining, now offers localities a choice of either hiring the state to retrain workers or hiring private vendors. But this reform was undertaken as part of a program to enhance the public worker training service, not diminish it.

POSSIBLY THE WORST single contribution of the economics profession to the understanding of political society is the tautological and straitened attempt to reduce all public-spiritedness or altruism to merely an odd, masochistic special case of egoistic utility-maximization. As Steven Kelman has observed, an ethic of public service is vital to a democratic system of government. When everything is reduced to a private, profit-maximizing transaction, that ethic is diminished. Government, certainly, does not have to conduct every piece of public business itself. The large non-profit sector, much of which today operates on public subsidy, is a crucial agent of public service. But like the polity, its ethic is service, community, and altruism, rather than private gain. The savings and loan industry used to be part of that sector. Today it has become part of the market sector, and the fire-sale disposition of savings and loan assets suggests just how inefficient a government bent on privatizing can be.

Libertarians find it convenient to invoke Tocqueville and to insist that government flourishes at the expense of community and voluntarism. But in truth, voluntary associations have often existed in cooperative symbiosis with government. The PTA is perhaps the supreme example of private voluntary energies working in close coordination with a public institution, the local school system. Almost every free public library has its adjunct association of volunteers. Hospital volunteers work to support institutions that today get close to half their income from the government. Ceding all of this activity to private profit-making institutions would do irreparable harm to the culture of volunteerism. The logic of service and the logic of profit are largely at odds. Why volunteer your time to an organization whose entire purpose is making a buck?

In a political society, the efficiency test is not the only test that matters. Even if the privatizers were right that government by contract and voucher were invariably more efficient and conducive to greater choice, there would still be a persuasive case for a strong and vital public realm. That case, of course, would be far more difficult to argue if one had to accept the claim that an effective polity required some sacrifice of economic well-being. But, happily, the privatizers are substantially wrong even on their own chosen ground of debate. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Candor and Contraption

Catherine Breillat, the Frenchwoman who adapted *36 Fillette* from a novel of her own and directed the film, says that it's based on something that once happened to her. Since this is the story of a 14-year-old girl's sexual initiation, Breillat's comment titillates; but more important, it adds to the film's scariness.

The title is a French dress size, which must be ample because this 14-year-old, played by Delphine Zentout, is voluptuous. She and her older brother and her parents, a working-class family, are vacationing in a tent pitched near a crowded beach. The troubles *en famille* are standard adolescent vs. parents fare. One evening Zentout and her brother, breaking loose from home, are picked up by some people in a car. The driver is a man in his late 30s, Etienne Chicot. Zentout is attracted to him, frightened, sullenly aggressive; Chicot, a skilled womanizer, is only moderately interested. So it is not quite the *Lolita* syndrome. The man is not particularly a pedophile; the nymphet is hotly curious, provocative, and, very privately, afraid.

36 Fillette
(Circle)

The January Man
(MGM)

In the course of the next few days, despite hassles with parents, Zentout pursues Chicot and becomes sexually intimate with him though she's not actually deflowered. The episode ends grubbily, unsatisfyingly. She looks up a teenage boy whom she doesn't much like and maneuvers him into initiating her fully. Then she derides him and leaves. In the last shot, outside, she faces the camera and smiles, sunnily. That smile could mean a number of things. To me, it meant that she is now ready to fend for herself sexually and is now ready for vengeance.

36 Fillette is distinct from other films of recent years about teenage girls and older men—*Le Beau-père*, *Peppermint Soda*, *Smooth Talk*—for two reasons. The first is stylistic. Breillat—and this is rare nowadays—is a disciple of Godard. She shows this most clearly not with jump-cuts or by fracturing the boundaries of the frame, but through a Godardian naturalism that burrows beyond reproduction of life to distillation, the way an enlarged photograph of a commonplace object renders it into something else. For instance, there's a long scene in Chicot's hotel suite where screen time almost duplicates real time. Zentout asks for a drink, and Chicot goes into the next room to mix it. The camera remains with her as she waits, sitting, fidgeting, looking about, picking up something, putting it down, etc. The elapsed minute or so not only brings us closer to Zentout with a kind of engaging candor; the breach of cinematic convention is mimetic of the breach of social convention that Zentout is committing by being in this room.

To underscore the Godard connection, Breillat uses Jean-Pierre Léaud for a long conversation with Zentout early on—inserted, irrelevant to the action, merely an inquiry into character, such as Léaud did for Godard in *Masculin-Féminin*.

The second distinction of *36 Fillette* is its frankness, which is treated quite casually, as if Zentout's actions were much more usual than society likes to hear about. On the one hand are the pretty patterns of behavior that older people impose on what they choose to forget of their own adolescence; on the other hand are the facts of sexual secrets, real or fantasized, that keep gnawing at the adolescent. (In Shepard's *Far North* a rabbity 15-year-old girl tells her aunt that she wishes she were dead, and the aunt says, "You'll only feel that way for another year, sweetheart.") All 14-year-old girls don't behave like Zentout, but not all parents want to know how many girls think about behaving that way. *36 Fillette* is discomfiting because it puts Zentout before us with nonchalant authenticity.

Is the older man reprehensible? Unreservedly, yes. But Zentout's actions make his response understandable. Breillat says that her early title for her novel and film was *Beware Wolves* or *How Young Girls Ask for Their Own Murder*.

John Patrick Shanley wrote *Moonstruck*, a romance that at least had some gleams of invention and a gently kidding attitude toward its story that made it palatable. This time Shanley has written a murder story, *The January Man*, which sweats to be both a hard-nosed Manhattan thriller and a vehicle for a mod Zorro. The two elements shrivel as they try to blend, and what's worse, the whole amateurish effort has been endorsed by some capable professionals.

That old reliable, the mass killer, is on the loose again, and once again the police are baffled. They must call in outside help but this time, instead of a private eye, it's an ex-NY detective who, for reasons no foggier than the plot in general, left the police force to become a fireman. In fact, our first glimpse of him shows him rescuing a child from a blaze and giving him mouth-to-mouth help. This hero is the brother of the police commissioner who has been ordered by the mayor to bring the ex-detective back. The hero once had an affair with

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Accused. Jodie Foster is the victim in a tavern gang-rape and discovers the added horror of bringing charges. Much of the bitter story is vivid. (Reviewed 11/21/88)

A Cry in the Dark. A recent Australian (unsolved) case of infanticide, in which the mother is accused. Meryl Streep is again uncannily reincarnated, though the role remains remote. (12/5/88)

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels. A clever script, some light-fingered direction, and Michael Caine's silken performance make this farce about Riviera con men very pleasant. (Despite Steve Martin.) (1/30/89)

Pelle the Conqueror. A large-scale, turn-of-the-century Danish epic of the soil, excellently made in every respect. Max von Sydow is superb as an aging farmhand who nurtures his son and sees him off into the world. (1/23/89)

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his brother's wife, and as a condition for coming back, he insists that Mrs. Commissioner be allowed to come to his apartment for dinner. In his apartment, which he virtually shares with a far-out painter, this detective-fireman-detective cooks his ex-lover an exotic meal.

OK? *Now!* The hero finally nabs the killer—through inferences, drawn from the past murders, that sound like *Mother Bomba's Dream Book*. One chief clue: he lines up photographs of the apartment buildings where previous killings have taken place, puts a blot of ink on the relevant window in each building, then reads the lines of blots as notes of music, recognizes the tune, and fills in the blot where the next killing will be attempted.

I haven't made any of this up: J. P. Shanley did, and got it produced. Some weeks ago I asked if there were a sanity test for producers. I repeat the question and now ask it also about actors. The hero of this nonsense is played by Kevin Kline, who was energetically dotty in *A Fish Called Wanda* but here cavorts in the midst of emptiness. The commissioner is Harvey Keitel, who must have been even sleepier when he took the role than he is in playing it. The commissioner's wife is Susan Sarandon, whose quality of enticing intelligence is insulted here. The mayor's daughter—oh, yes, he has one, and she gets romantically involved with Kline—is Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, poor woman. The role of the mayor returns to the screen Rod Steiger, the only actor I've ever seen who can simultaneously scream a lot and blink a lot.

CROCODILE DANDY

The Daylight Moon
by Les A. Murray

(Persea Books, 111 pp., $9.95)

The Vernacular Republic: Selected Poems
by Les A. Murray

(Persea Books, 102 pp., $8.95)

The barbarians approaching the capital bring with them not only the baggage of a cow-horned, shaggy army, but also the vandalization of the imperial language. They bring their bards with them, as well as their camp-followers. What is repulsive about these bards, however, is not that they elevate the dialect of the tribe (that is to be expected), but that they can recite long passages of the imperial literature as if it were their own; and with a vigor, even a love, that brings a blush to the civilized cheek. They come over the line of the sands with lances and camels, but also with the cacophony of the pots and pans of a dented provincial vocabulary. Therefore the defenders invite the bards to dinner. They drape their hairy shoulders with the sashes of the Academy. They are fascinated by the burrs and thistles of their accents, while remaining astounded by their scholarship. But the temples are not threatened, the city is intact, because the barbarians have the same table manners, and have every intention of returning home.

Let the shaggy, long horde of spiky letters and the dark-rumbling of hexametrical phalanxes rise over the outback toward the capital of the English language, and you have, like a scene out of a Mad Max movie, something of the shaggy power, grace, and mass of Les Murray's poems. They quake on the page. They leave tracks like home-built engines. They stagger and they are staggering. They can be walked around like eccentric but practical inventions, but only Mr. Murray knows how to drive them.

You can call him Les. I assure you that he would not mind. This custom of the barbarians, this habit of calling new and presumably cursory acquaintances by their first names from the second sentence, makes the capital wince. This is still how one distinguishes Americans from Englishmen, and this formality, this courtesy of advancing politely in squares, a strategy little different from shaking hands and nodding, may have something to do with losing the Revolutionary War. It certainly attracts Australians to Americans. Perhaps the barbarians cannot manage the third person. One is at a loss to know why. Or it may have to do with a sense of space; for somehow, the wider the geography, the terser the vocabulary, whether it be the monosyllables of sailors, cowboys, or pioneers of the outback. Although this seems to be turning Murray into the appointed bard of the Australian wastes, a kind of Crocodile Dandy, the joy is that the poems of his two volumes printed in this country, *The Vernacular Republic* and *The Daylight Moon*, have a width and an affability that may sound garrulous by contrast with the myth of the terse pioneer, though they have the same accent, the same tonal truth.

Connect this shambling off of the third person in grammar with the shrug that accommodates History, that refuses to treat it as noble but neutered, but rather as a bit of a shambles through which one walks in khaki shorts, and you will get closer to Les than you might to Mr. Murray. In fact, he has a poem about shorts. It is called "The Dream of Wearing Shorts Forever," a longish poem that ends

> . . . walking meditatively
> among green timber, through the grassy
> forest
> towards a calm sea
> and looking across to more of that great
> island
> and the further topics.

Reader, this does not mean that you can put your arm around him, or, for that matter, encircle his imagination, because Murray is a very large man with a very large mind. What it does mean is that you can get into the verse immediately, as you can with Kipling. (The dead need no formal introductions.) His range is History, and our sense of his scholarship vital and immense. All the barbarians have traditional antecedents; but he makes sure that breadth is its beginning, that his invitation to enter a vernacular republic is not a hearty, beer-lifting "Welcome to Osstrailya," but as open an invitation to the soul to feel the freshness of any part of the world, from Sydney to the ruins of Rome, as Whitman's horizon-wide title, "Leaves of Grass."

The language of grass is the vernacular republic, the phenomenon (and the contradiction) of a daylight moon powerful in its persistence, elate in its indifference to digital time. These are not words to Murray: soul, love, humanity. They are

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not believed in with a parsonical vigor. They are natural, they are fated, they are what we are. *The Daylight Moon* is dedicated to the glory of God. The last time that a bard wrote such a birthday card to the Almighty, apart from Dylan Thomas's dedication of his *Collected Poems*, it was probably a monk, not an ascetic one, but a wandering wide-eyed friar, a Franciscan. There is no poetry in the English language now so rooted in its sacredness, so broad-leafed in its pleasures, and yet so intimate and so conversational:

> It's our annual visit to the latitudes
> of rice, kerosene and resignation . . .
>
> . . . an intrusive, heart-narrowing season
> at this far southern foot of the monsoon.
> As the kleenex flower, the hibiscus
> drops its browning wads, we forget
> annually, as one forgets a sickness.
> The stifling days will never come again,
> not now that we've seen the first sweater
> tugged down on the beauties of division
> and inside the rain's millions, a risen
> loaf of cat on a cool night veranda.

Or:

> . . . listen for black Freudian beaches; they
> seek a miles-wide pustular
> rock dome of pure Crude, a St. Paul's-in-
> profundis. There are many
> wrong numbers on the geophone, but it's
> brought us some distance, and by car.
> Every machine has been love and a true
> answer.

There is a difference between vigor and energy. Vigor can be the imagination lifting weights. Energy is the magic that levitates objects. Kipling was vigorous, Hopkins was energetic. What is called "noise" in poetry occurs when even a poet as great as Yeats attempts to elevate vigor into energy. (He himself wrote that "out of the quarrel with others we make rhetoric, out of the quarrel with ourselves we make poetry.") It is vigor that makes so much of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" noisy, so unlike Hopkins's religious sonnets. The difference between vigor and energy is, quite simply, the difference between Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. Dickinson has so much energy that she can afford to be narrow, but Whitman's vigorous and hearty exhortations can tire, like a camp counselor urging all us tired boys to come down to the old Indian lake, when we'd rather sit here considering one of Miss Dickinson's worms or sparrows. It is also, to batter the point, one of the reasons why, in this age of muttering soliloquies, of mildly tormented asides, an energy like Ted Hughes is misjudged as being a "noisy" poet. Noise is an attribute of praise. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." But contemporary verse, in its modest self-centeredness, its muted, agnostic shit-kicking, averts its face from awe.

THERE IS Beerbohm's famous cartoon of Whitman inviting the American eagle to soar in front of a dour and skeptical Queen Victoria. Les Murray's position now in Australian literature takes that risk. But he knows that to become the bard of modern Australia, to celebrate its spaces and its convict past, is only to make a predictable noise. A patriotic flapping. But the power, and the persistence, of his celebration is religious, and without assaulting us, because he is doing something so ordinary, so vernacular, and yet so fated, that it must make criticism cower: it is making poetry holy.

A man who has known deserts believes in wells. We turn our wells on through faucets, and by commonness and familiarity we diminish the elemental sacredness of water. If Murray's poetry gushes, then bless it, because it is the gushing not of an oil strike, or of a convivial, "matey" garrulity, but of the striking by a rod in the desert. It cannot help its force:

> Dream surrounds, is infused with this
> world. It is not subordinate.
> We come from it; we live at tangents and
> accords with it; we go
> back into it, at last, through the drowsing
> torture chambers to it.
>
> We have gills for dream-life, in our head;
> we must keep them wet
> from the nine-nights' immense, or dreams
> will emerge bodily, and enforce it.
> Hide among or deny the shallow dreadful
> ones, and they may stay out.

It would also have been easier for Murray to be hermetic, to moor himself out in some enthusiastic wasteland on his subcontinent, away from machines and the corruptions of civilization, to play the applaudable part of a white aborigine, delving in myth for material. But the poems praise technology not as a marvel, of course, but as part of the growth of human nature, secondary and functional. And they celebrate these engines, not from a distance, like Whitman's "To a Locomotive," admiring their lines and power as if they were arranged in an exhibition, but as working things, things we enter and use. Expressionist poetry of the early Russian revolution in which machines are praised is no differ-

THE ASSIMILATION OF BACKGROUND

Driving on that wide jute-coloured country
we came at last to the station,
its homestead with lawn and steel awnings
like a fortress against the sun.
And when we knocked, no one answered;
only a black dog came politely
and accompanied us round the verandahs
as we peered into rooms, and called brightly
Anyone home? The billiard room,
shadowed dining room, gauze-tabled kitchen
gave no answer. Cricket bats, ancient
steamer trunks, the chugging coolroom engine
disregarded us. Only the dog's very patient
claws ticked with us out of the gloom
to the grounds' muffling dust, to the machine shed
black with oil and bolts, with the welder
mantis-like on its cylinder of clocks
and then to the stallion's enclosure.
The great bay horse came up to the wire,
gold flares shifting on his muscles, and stood
as one ungelded in a thousand
of his race, but imprisoned for his sex,
a gene-transmitting engine, looking at us
gravely as a spirit, out between
his brain's potent programmes. Then a heifer,
Durham-roan, but with Brahman hump and rings
around her eyes, came and stood among us
and a dressy goat in sable and brushed fawn
ogled us for offerings beyond
the news all had swiftly gathered from us
in silence, and could, it seemed, accept.
We had been received, and no-one grew impatient
but only the dog, host-like, walked with us
back to our car. The lawn-watering sprays
ticked over. And we saw
that out on that bare, crusted country
background and foreground had merged;
nothing that existed there was background.

LES A. MURRAY

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ent from pre-Raphaelitism. An object is idealized into a glow through an amber filter, a powerful tenderness. Vigor is again confused with energy. The enthusiasm of Kipling for machines, in a poem like "MacAndrew's Hymn," is political in intention; it is on the same level as O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, in which the worker with the oilcloth and the sacred stains on his face becomes superior to the class for whose safety he is responsible. The joy in Murray, however, is that he is the engineer:

> And entering on the only smooth road
> this steamer glides past the rattling
> shipyard
> where they're having the usual Aboriginal
> whale-feast in reverse, with scaffolding
> and planking;
> engine smoke marching through blue
> sheoak trees
> along the edge of Jack Robertson farms,
> the river opens and continually opens
> and lashed on deck, a Vauxhall car
> intricate in brass, with bonnet grooves,
> a bulb to squawk, great guillotine levers,
> high diamond-buttoned leather club chairs
> and dressing-table windscreen to flash afar:
> in British cherry metal, detailed in mustard
> it cruises up country with a moveless
> wheel.

If, in poems less calm and measured than the one quoted above, Murray's meter sometimes achieves the monody of a piston, instead of a heartbeat, it has a lot to do with scale, with the imperative of expansion. But sometimes Murray pummels you with the resources of a vocabulary so jaunty in its confidence that it becomes truly jingoistic in its belligerence, insisting that one had better learn his language if one is going to travel the wide map of the verse, and in his own accent, at that:

> *Mr Nouveau Jack old man my legs are all*
> *paralysed up.*
> Black smuts swirled weightless in the room
> *some good kind person*
> like the nausea of a novice free-falling in a
> deep mine's cage . . .

It is not that the vocabulary is different. The italicized words are from a letter, and the other words are English, and not Australian English particularly. The rush and sputter of the line, the packed half-puns and off-rhymes, are like technical fireworks, and their succession of explosions can only be managed exactly by imagining Murray's own voice. Every poet of achievement writes with his own voice, finally, even his own accent, inflection, tone, though the posture is sometimes too burly.

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There is a difference, however, between entering the tone and mimicking it, because such mimicry only creates difference, or even indifference, like a challenge we do not want to take on. Carried to the point of resistance, it is this, of course, that irritates or frightens the defenders of the capital language: they are quite willing to admit Australian into English, but they have no intention of repeating it in the very melody on which it is based. The gates will yield, and the language will be expanded, even wider than the physical borders of the empire. The language of the former provinces and protectorates and dominions must beware, however, of another kind of arrogance, of a sort of vernacular or sublime revenge, or, less vehemently, of a challenge. Only big poets can be parodied; and it is one of the signs of a major poet that Murray comes close to self-parody.

Murray's tone is vernacular, but not his vocabulary. He has not devised, like Whitman, a meter that is consistent, as open to adaptation as that of the Old Testament poets, a rhythm that is both prophecy and bequest. Whitman proclaims a new form, a new breadth for his new country, in a line as long as its new horizons, opening up poetry in the same way that his pioneers were opening up America. But broad as this poetry appeared to be, it also had, at its center, a narrow didactic passion, a presumption of inevitability in its evangelism, its proclamations that for American poets this was the only way to see and therefore to write.

Whitman's heirs have continued in that voice, the voice of the didact, the voice of vigor opposed to the claim of energy. Modern American poetics is as full of its sidewalk hawkers as a modern American city: *this* is the only meter, *this* is the American way to breathe, *this* is the variable foot. One can stop and watch the cup-and-bean demonstrations from Pound, to Williams, to Ginsberg, to Duncan, to Oppen, challenging young American bystanders to try it, then pass on, shaking one's head at how shrill some of Walt's boys have become.

I do not mean this aside to assault the tiring, variable pamphlets forced into one's hands by various sects, but to dramatize the challenge that faced Murray as an Australian poet. The superficial seduction was to see Australia as America's mirror, for all those American things were there: industrial energy, climatic variety, new frontiers, vernacular immediacy, modern cities, deserts, a history of severance, a history of envy of Europe, of those very old cultures that Whitman urged his boys to erase as overpaid accounts. To stand between Kipling and Whitman must have meant some confusion. To avoid the elegiac Kipling of the empire's sunset, as well as the oracular sunrise of the new world (American Australia); to resist the evangelism of proclaiming that there was something called Australian breathing and a variable Australian foot; to learn to deafen himself to all the booths of the poetics bazaar, some howling, some with the soft monosyllabic sell, meant that Murray had to wait for the proper light to fall across his mind and his page, a light untinted and unfiltered through patriotism or guilt. And the light had to be ordinary: daylight, Australian day.

This is the light that comes off the pages of *The Vernacular Republic* and *The Daylight Moon*, the hard light of ordinariness, almost a glare. Murray is not an elegiac poet, which again could have been a great career move. Instead he has manufactured a syntax that digests iron and spits out petals. If he is anything, he is Roman in the way that Ben Jonson was Roman, firm-based and pillared with scholarship, way above the tiny hawkers below in the market. Not many daylight moons ago, the barbarians were admired from a distance for certain things peculiar to them—a rough charm, a vigor, an enthusiasm that permitted them to do their unabashed bellowing to God on behalf of the capital named Literature—of which the dandies and the eunuchs of the empire are no longer capable. It is easy to hear any one of those voices urging Murray to keep his voice down. But here we have a poet whose open duty, and he proclaims it repeatedly (tiringly, if you like), is praise. A poet who has himself been praised, but who would, to the amazement of his adulators, rather go home, put on his khaki shorts, and write like this:

> Sprawl is really classless, though. It's John
> Christopher Frederick Murray
> asleep in his neighbours' best bed in spurs
> and oilskins
> but not having thrown up:
> sprawl is never Calum who, gagging in the
> hallway of our house,
> reinvented the Festoon. Rather
> it's Beatrice Miles going twelve hundred
> ditto in a taxi,
> No Lewd Advances, No Hitting Animals,
> No Speeding,
> on the proceeds of her two-bob-a-sonnet
> Shakespeare readings.
> An image of my country. And would that it
> were more so.

but like this as well:

> Those hills are ancient stone gods
> just beginning to be literature

DEREK WALCOTT

Derek Walcott's most recent book is *The Arkansas Testament* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). He was recently awarded the Queen's Medal for Poetry.

THE P. R. PRESIDENCY

The Invention of George Washington
by Paul K. Longmore

(University of California Press, 337 pp., $25)

George Washington Slept Here:
Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986
by Karal Ann Marling

(Harvard University Press, 453 pp., $39.95)

After a presidential election that seemed to hinge on the image projected by the candidates, these books on the image projected by the first president may remind us that the relationship between image and actuality was never simple. Paul Longmore has examined the origins of the national image of George Washington, an image that still seems to hide the man. (How could anyone have been *that* good?) It was not, Longmore shows, the work of Washington's admirers, nor yet of any 18th-century equivalent of the press agent. Washington de-

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liberately created his image himself

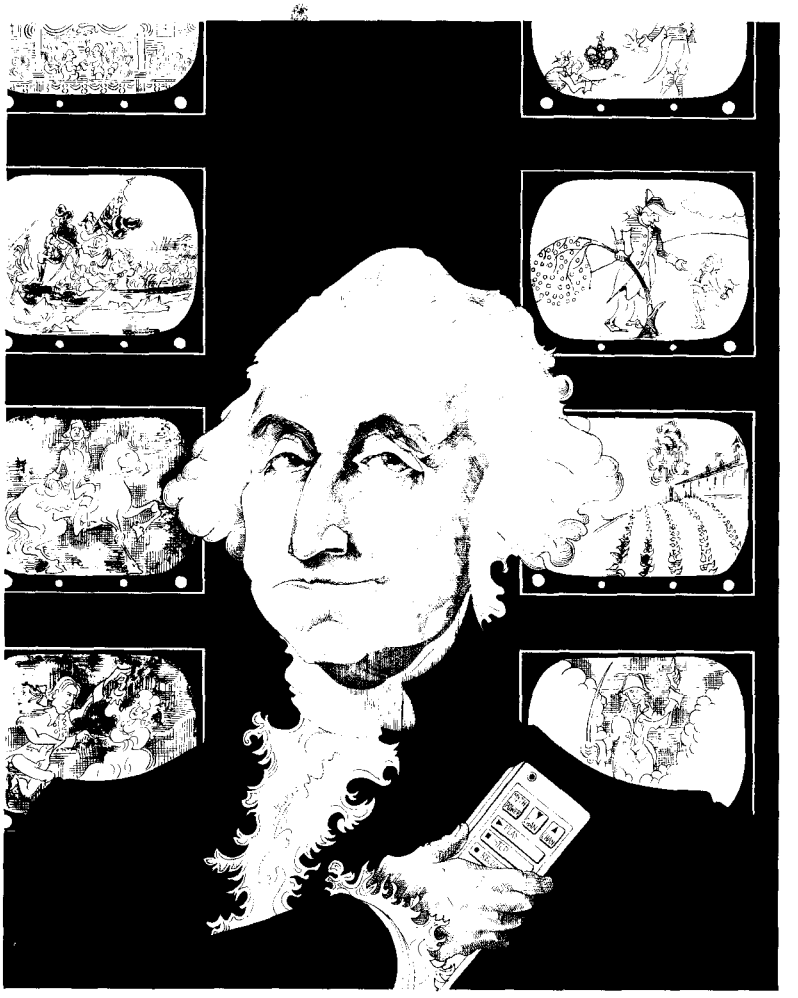
From the beginning of his career, Washington "labored to fashion for himself a public persona." He did it with such skill, moreover, that "few realized that he presented his audience with a studied performance." Washington was possessed, Longmore argues, by a relentless ambition, by a craving to be honored by his contemporaries. In 18th-century Virginia (as recent scholarship has emphasized) his genteel contemporaries prided themselves on highly visible accomplishments appropriate to their station: on their horsemanship, on their ballroom dancing, on the quality of the tobacco they grew on their plantations. Washington, accordingly, took pains to become a superb horseman and a polished dancer. His tobacco crop had to be the best.

Throughout his life Washington gave what seems inordinate attention to public appearance. As a soldier he insisted on neat and tidy uniforms and quarters, for himself and for his men. At Mount Vernon, his instructions to overseers suggest that he cared as much about how his fields looked to visitors as he did about the crops they produced. A place so closely tied to him had to look exactly right, as he had to look and act exactly right. Washington never stopped worrying about his reputation.

In his early youth, he gained the rank of colonel in the Virginia militia at the precocious age of 23, but he worried that he could not attain the greater glory of a royal commission in the regular British army. When he attended the Continental Congress in his provincial uniform, he fully expected to be placed in command of the continental troops, but he worried that he might not have the experience to carry them to success and to glory. When he did, and became the new nation's hero, he worried about doing anything that might tarnish his hard-won fame. He agonized, for example, about whether to attend the Constitutional Convention of 1787; if it should prove to be a fiasco, his reputation would suffer for his participation in it. He finally decided to take the risk; if the convention did not succeed and the union collapsed, his reputation as the creator of independence would collapse with it

Such a concern for image inevitably suggests less interest in actuality than in appearance. But that is not quite what Longmore is saying, or what Washington was up to. Washington did not simply appear to be a good horseman. He *was* a good horseman. If he was conscious that people would admire him for it, he wanted them to admire what was real, to honor what was truly honorable. Nature imitated art but remained nature still. Washington became what he wanted to be, and what he wanted to be, as Longmore takes us through the progress of his early life, was the best.

The best was defined, to begin with, by the aspirations common to the Virginia gentry of the 18th century. But as Washington grew, his vision of himself and of the public to which he presented himself expanded. In the French and Indian War, what one historian has called "The Great War for the Empire," Washington saw his talents recognized by his fellow Virginians, but not by the imperial government in London. He came to appreciate, along with other Virginians, the diatribes of the English "country party," and of radical Whig writers, against the corruption of the British government. In their delineations of what was wrong with British public life, Washington gained a vision of what was right, not merely for Virginians but for Americans. Indeed, for the good society anywhere: the good society would be governed by men like himself, men willing to sacrifice private gain for public good, men who did not seek public office but had it thrust upon them because of their obvious merit. British society was lost in corruption, but in America the Whig ideal might be realized.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

It could be argued, and Longmore in effect does argue it, that Washington sought public office throughout his life. In his early years he sought it in the Virginia House of Burgesses just as others did, by plying the voters with rum and barbecues. But as his vision of American virtue developed, he sought national office, as commander in chief or as president, by not seeking it. And Americans obligingly thrust it upon him, replacing the adulation formerly accorded a distant king with what amounted to adoration for the man who fulfilled their ideal.

What made Washington so successful was that he kept his ambition in harmony with the values of his countrymen. If he replaced George III, it was not as a monarch, because by the time Americans declared independence they had turned their backs on monarchy. There were those among them who would gladly have made him king, but they were a small minority, and they did not include

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Washington himself. Instead, Washington linked his own success with that of the new republic, facing down every effort to elevate him at the expense of the principles that had informed the Revolution. By instinct or by calculation, he foresaw that the reputation he valued so highly would suffer if he allowed his admirers to saddle him with powers that might threaten republican government.

As a result, Washington's own enormous prestige helped to sustain the republic that honored him. Indeed, Washington became as concerned with the country's reputation as with his own. When he worried in the 1780s about "the humiliating and contemptible figure we are about to make in the annals of mankind," it was because he had tied his own honor so closely to the honor of the United States that the one could not suffer without injuring the other. Longmore shows how this symbiotic relationship developed from Washington's early youth to his appointment as commander in chief. He leaves us in no doubt that Washington sought every honor accorded him along the way; and though Longmore is a little too insistent on the originality of this interpretation, he does not overstate it. If the effect may seem at first to diminish the man, in the end it makes his commitment to republican values all the more impressive.

That commitment, while it helps to explain his popularity and his success, is paradoxically at odds with the regal appearance that Washington conveyed. Benjamin Rush, the Philadelphia physician, observed as early as 1775 that "there is not a king in Europe that would not look like a valet de chambre by his side." And Washington looked more and more regal as time went on. The word "look" is important. The fact that Washington looked like a king even as he eschewed kingship suggests how much his place in the collective memory rests on the appearance he cultivated. We do not, perhaps, think of him as kinglike, but the image that persists is one of aloof dignity. It rests as much on what he did not do as on what he did: he did not go the way of a Cromwell before him or of a Bonaparte after him. Garry Wills captured the essence of it in calling him "a virtuoso of resignations," and in observing that "he perfected the art of getting power by giving it away."

The image that survives is curiously motionless. We know him as a soldier and as a president, but we seldom visualize him in action (except apocryphally, when we picture him doing things that he demonstrably did not do or could not have done, like foolishly standing in a small boat while crossing an icy river or chopping down the famous cherry tree). The image is so exalted and so empty of any specific content that Americans of successive generations have been able to fill it with whatever characteristics they approve or for which they wish to gain approval.

THE DIFFERENT characteristics attributed to him over the past century emerge in fascinating detail in Karal Ann Marling's study of popular celebrations, pageants, and artifacts in which the image of Washington, appropriately or inappropriately, was called into play. One of the most inappropriate that a few of us can remember was the plaster effigy, 65 feet tall, by James Earle Fraser that overlooked the trylon and perisphere of the "Century of Progress" World's Fair of 1939. What Washington had to do with that century, or with its progress, remains a mystery, despite Grover Whalen's fatuous claim that the fair would "attempt to accomplish in our day what Washington and his contemporaries did in theirs." Somehow Washington's blessing, all 65 feet of it, was thought necessary to show that the fair was a good thing.

Marling ranges widely over Americans' reconstruction of their past, but Washington remains the centerpiece, if only because every popular appeal to the past, whether in architecture, furniture, or fake antiques, has seemed incomplete without him. The variety of kitsch that Marling has collected to illustrate her book is testimony in itself to the grip of the Washington image on the popular imagination. She has obviously had a great deal of fun uncovering these artifacts of ancient celebrations, and also in savoring the incongruities and absurdities of the occasions themselves: the tableaux vivants, the Martha Washington tea parties, the floats, the parades, the restorations, the amusement parks. She tells it all with an exuberant wit that leaves the reader gasping for breath, until she concludes that by 1939 Washington had been "too popular for too long" and from sheer overexposure "had come to be a bore." But Marling leaves us with the assurance that Washington will still be called on as needed "to dance atten-

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dance at the most authentic, costliest Martha Washington tea ever mounted" and no doubt to give his blessing to much more dubious activities.

IN THE light of Longmore's depiction of Washington's own adeptness about his image, it is hard to know whether to laugh or to cry at his countrymen's manipulation of it. Apart from the relatively innocuous use of Washington's countenance for trivial purposes (to decorate pocket knives, razor blades, bottles, T-shirts), the father of his country has been posthumously enlisted in a good many causes that would have surprised him.

He might not have found it incongruous when early 19th-century depictions stressed his aristocratic leanings. Nor would he have objected to the nostalgia that presented him "as an unchangeable, inherently conservative force," and as "a symbol and guardian of the Union" in the days when the Union was threatened. But he would probably have been startled, during the re-enactment of his inaugural in 1889, to hear a denunciation of "the constant importation as now, in this country, of the lowest orders of people from abroad to dilute the quality of our natural manhood." Washington's concern for the country whose image he linked to his own also included a vision of its becoming an asylum for "the poor, the needy and oppressed of the Earth." He might have been even more puzzled to hear himself in the 1930s giving approval to communism as "20th-century Americanism," or to discover at a rally of the German-American Bund that he was "the first Fascist." By that time, of course, he was also "a great business man . . . the prototype of the modern man of business."

The image could be conformed to almost anything. One wonders, for that reason, whether it has operated at all, as it did with Washington himself, to affect actual behavior. There are a few indications in Marling's survey to suggest that it occasionally may have had an influence, though in curious ways. While various presidents have called on Washington for support, most of them have simply re-created him in their own image, as when Herbert Hoover turned him into an engineer. But Calvin Coolidge, who often cited Washington, affected a style that seems to have owed something to his consciousness of Washington's reserve. There was nothing very heroic about Coolidge, but Americans seem to have enjoyed his manner of holding office as though he did not wish to. His most famous act was choosing not to run in 1928; and although his resignation of power was less significant than Washington's, his aloofness may well have been, at least in part, imitative.

What is more instructive is the adulation that Americans, and the rest of the world, heaped on Charles Lindbergh. It was noticed at the time that no other American since Washington had won such worldwide fame, and Marling offers some shrewd insights into the parallels between them. Lindbergh, she points out, became a hero for doing something that nobody else had done, with equipment that was equally available to everyone else. When journalists asked what made him great, they had to answer by "a flight into the cloudy realm of qualities of character that led Lindbergh and *only* Lindbergh to fly the ocean alone." When pressed to define those qualities, they could come up only with "what Lindbergh was, or seemed to be, unlike." Consequently "the personality created for Lindbergh by a subtractive process was faultless by default, stainless by omission, and curiously blank."

Lindbergh, then, became a "streamlined model" of Washington. As in the case of the Washington image, the "nullity invited the public to attach his name to almost any passing fad." The parallel to Washington lies not in any imitative effort on Lindbergh's part, but in the public enthusiasm (though relatively short-lived) for a hero whose image could be so readily manipulated. Not all American heroes have been cast in this mold. Jackson, Lincoln, the two Roosevelts, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford were not at all reserved or remote, and the image each of them projected was anything but bland or blank or negative. But none of them, with the possible exception of Lincoln, has invited the kind of honor by association that Washington still holds out for the ambitious. Men and women in public life do not feel a need to get right with Jackson, but Washington on his lonely pedestal is still called on for benedictions. He is not just a hero, he is The Hero. Neither of these books is likely to change that; but like all the best works of history, they suggest as much to us about ourselves as they tell us about their subjects.

EDMUND S. MORGAN

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GIMME SHELTER

Sanctuary: A Story of American Conscience and Law in Collision by Ann Crittenden

(Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 410 pp. $21.95)

There are perhaps 900,000 Salvadoran immigrants in the United States. About three-quarters of these people came after civil war engulfed their country in 1979. The heaviest flow took place in the early '80s, when death squad activity and Marxist insurgency both reached their peaks. At that time, the flight of the Salvadorans to America became an issue in the broader debate over American policy in Central America. The Reagan administration, led by then-Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Elliott Abrams, argued that the Salvadorans were mere "economic" migrants who didn't qualify for political asylum. Since their country was on the road to democracy under American tutelage, he said, they had no reason to worry if the United States sent them back.

Along the Mexican border in Arizona, however, a group of liberal church people, critics of the administration's policies in Central America and elsewhere, disagreed. They were outraged by the contradiction between Abrams's version of events in El Salvador and the terrible things they heard from the Salvadorans arriving in their communities. They were convinced that deportation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) meant certain death for the Salvadorans.

The church people decided to take the law into their own hands, to offer "sanc-

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tuary" to the Central Americans. Ann Crittenden has chronicled the lives and motivations of the people who turned their homes and their churches into refuges for undocumented immigrants, and ultimately smuggled Salvadorans from Mexico into Arizona. Thanks largely to favorable coverage, this quixotic movement became a cause célèbre on the liberal left—and a major political nuisance for the Reagan administration, which was eager to find support for its policy of counterinsurgency in El Salvador. In the end, the feds cracked down. In 1986 eight members of the movement were convicted of smuggling illegal aliens into the United States.

This is a subject rich in both political and moral nuance, and Crittenden has obviously taken pains to explore it. Quoting liberally from court transcripts and other documents, she presents a comprehensive record of a highly charged chapter in the debate over American involvement in Central America. Given that the outcome of her tale is known in advance, however, and that much of the story involves church meetings and court proceedings, it's a little hard for her to keep the pot boiling. Crittenden could have done with less narration and more argument. She is clearly alive to, and fascinated by, the moral dilemmas raised by sanctuary. Her sympathy for the movement is evident enough. But she fails to make a systematic defense of her sympathies. She seems to think that the facts speak for themselves. But the facts are more ambiguous than that, and many of them do not support the case she struggles to make.

DID THE exodus of the Salvadorans to the United States in the early '80s, and the Reagan administration's resistance to granting them asylum, constitute grounds for civil disobedience of the kind practiced by the sanctuary movement? And if not, what was, or is, the alternative? The United States has a proud tradition of welcoming the world's seekers of freedom and opportunity. Immigration has always been a historic boon for American society, for humanitarian and pragmatic reasons. Providing a safe haven for oppressed people from around the world renovates our sense of democratic identity. And fresh injections of people eager to seek their fortunes through effort and invention invigorate our capitalist economy. The sanctuary movement's helping hand for the Salvadorans was clearly

Mixed Blessings

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Heinz R. Kuehn

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more in keeping with these traditions than the administration's cold shoulder.

But that isn't the only issue. Ideally, the United States would grant entrance to everyone who wants to come here. But open borders is not a feasible policy, because there will always be a need to screen out clearly undesirable entrants such as criminals, and because public support would break down during rushes into the country spurred by crisis. Thus, the debate is about the second-best, about how to limit admission as nearly in accordance with American ideals as possible; what criteria to apply to immigrant applications, what overall ceiling to place on the number of people admitted, and so on. To some extent, those rules are inevitably arbitrary. (In the not so distant past, they have been downright racist.) Some people with worthy claims to a haven in America get stuck on the visa line; others with similar claims waltz in, through quirks in the law.

CURRENT LAW and current policy enshrine the distinction between "economic" migrants and "political" migrants. The latter are considered more deserving of favorable treatment than the former. But this, too, seems a fairly arbitrary notion. There are always difficulties in determining whether any given refuge-seeker's motives for leaving home and coming to America are either purely economic or purely political. Often they are mixed. In any case, it isn't clear whether a society like ours really should adopt such hard and fast distinctions. Is it worse to be a poor Haitian than, say, an unpublished dissident Polish playwright? Who would contribute more to our own society? Few Americans could comfortably make a definitive judgment. Yet since World War II, almost anyone fleeing a Communist regime has been able to count on getting in to the United States, on political grounds. It's usually been tougher, if not impossible, for asylum-seekers trying to escape authoritarian regimes the United States supports. At bottom, the Reagan administration's approach to the El Salvador refugee issue carried on that unproud postwar tradition.

But the sanctuary movement never challenged the validity of the distinction. The Arizona "underground railroad" for the Salvadorans was, instead, a subsidiary of the broader movement against the administration's foreign policy. The administration kept people out of the United States to prove a point about events in Central America. The sanctuary movement ushered them in to the United States to prove the opposite point. The result was the sanctuary movement set itself up as a kind of counter-INS. It did not seek to remove political considerations from the asylum process; it sought, rather, to substitute a different set of political considerations in support of its own ideological agenda.

Certain refugees, for example, were selected for "public sanctuary," a kind of road show in which Salvadorans told their stories of repression to church groups and the press. The better the story, and the better the victim's public speaking abilities, the better the chances that he would get sanctuary. Crittenden writes: "Darlene [Nacgorski, a sanctuary leader] didn't tell the refugees what to say, but she didn't want to send out anyone whose experience contradicted what she and the sanctuary movement believed to be true: that the Salvadoran and Guatemalan regimes were brutalizing their own people." Not much different from the Reagan administration's periodic displays of defectors from Nicaragua and Cuba. And not obviously "fairer" than the highly politicized criteria of Reagan's INS.

IN THE END, even this group that began in the belief that everyone had the right to get into the United States wound up screening applicants. And it did so for many of the same reasons the government does: the flow of immigrants far outstripped the resources available to help them; some were alcoholics or criminals "unfit" for U.S. residence; and so on. "The border workers . . . realized that the answer to Central America's problems wasn't bringing everyone into the United States," observes Crittenden. "It was important, most agreed, to help only people who had no alternative."

But who might those people be? There was confusion, above all, about who was a purely "political" refugee and who was not. It surprised the sanctuary people to discover that many of the Salvadorans were in fact "economic" refugees, like the man who wanted to come to the United States to get a job so he could pay off a loan he owed back home. The administration wasn't always right about the Salvadorans; but it wasn't always wrong, either. In fact, both the administration and the sanctuary movement, because of their acceptance of the rigid distinction between political motives and economic motives, failed fully to comprehend the fact that the Salvadorans were fleeing war *and* social breakdown, with all the woes—political, psychological, and economic—that entails. A recent survey of Salvadoran émigrés in the United States by Segundo Montes, a sociologist at San Salvador's left-leaning Catholic University, found that 28.5 percent of those who left El Salvador after 1980 cited exclusively political reasons, 20.6 percent cited a mixture of political and economic reasons, and about half cited economic reasons.

Faced with a reality that was no more perfectly consonant with its ideological preferences than with those of the Reagan administration, the sanctuary movement did more or less what the administration did: it relied on its "instincts" to determine who should stay. Those instincts were not always generous. Arizona church people even wound up "deporting" 23 Guatemalans who didn't meet its standards. It put them on a bus back to Mexico.

AS PRECIOUS as our generous tradition of safe haven may be, the rule of law is even more essential to our democracy. True, the Reagan administration probably could have left the sanctuary movement well enough alone, the movement's provocative media stunts notwithstanding; the movement succeeded in smuggling in only about 2,000 refugees, far fewer than the big-time, profit-making smugglers known as "coyotes" bring in. And it is true that the administration probably chose to prosecute in order to send a political message of its own to other groups opposed to its Central America policy. Still, the burden properly fell on the sanctuary movement to show that its own political standards should substitute for those of the duly constituted authorities—to show, in other words, that the plight of the Salvadorans was so desperate, and the options to sanctuary so limited, that the only alternative left was to smuggle them into the United States in violation of the law.

There might be a case for that, too, if their actions were morally equivalent, as the church people claimed, to those of the Quakers in the Underground Railroad that helped blacks escape slavery, or of the "good gentiles" who rescued Jews from Hitler during World War II—and if the actions of federal officials were, as the sanctuary movement also claimed, like those of the "good Germans" who passively collaborated with

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bureaucratic genocide. (After his conviction, a sanctuary worker named Phil Willis-Conger rushed up to the federal prosecutor and gave him an angry Nazi salute.) Harriet Tubman and Raoul Wallenberg qualify as moral heroes for two reasons: first, because the evils that the laws of their time protected were so enormous; and second, because the alternatives to breaking the law were few and the risks of doing so were great.

The sanctuary movement's claim to join such company reflects its members' moral excitability, not their moral clarity. A characteristic of that moral excitability is a sloppy use of historical analogy. There is really no comparison between the 40,000 death-squad killings in El Salvador in the early '80s, awful as they were, and the annihilation of six million Jews by Hitler. Nor is there any fair comparison between the actions of the American government toward Central America and Central American refugees in the '80s, however misguided, and those of the Nazis toward the Jews, the Gypsies, and the homosexuals.

While there are documented cases in which people who returned to El Salvador—either because they were deported or because they chose to go back—have been killed, it has never been shown that the over 40,000 Salvadorans deported from the United States have faced systematic persecution back home. This squares with the fact that most of them fled out of a mixture of political and economic motives. The results of three studies on the subject range from ambiguous about to supportive of the proposition that the deportees face no special risk. The most recent, by the respected Intergovernmental Commission on Migration, found that in 1986 only one of 5,203 deportees it surveyed was killed under suspicious circumstances. Crittenden saves these facts for the last three pages of her second appendix. What's more disturbing, nowhere in her text does she challenge the sanctuary movement's rather stunning claim to moral equivalence with the "good gentiles."

THEN THERE is the question of alternatives. The sanctuary movement never exhausted its options before opting for civil disobedience. Jim Corbett, for example, was already planning to open a sanctuary just one week after witnessing the arrest of a Salvadoran by INS. The courts and INS bureaucracy, however biased and skewed they may have been, were open to legal challenges of deportation and to the government's policies in general. Congress was open to lobbying. As Judge Earl Carroll put it at the sanctuary trial:

> There is the INS process, and to the extent that that process is disinterested, perfunctory, badly handled, failing in due process characteristics, then it seems to me that that can be questioned, and can be questioned directly, and perhaps could have been and should have been long since questioned. . . . To suggest that these defendants or any other individuals, no matter how well motivated, as a matter of necessity or dissatisfaction with that process, can set themselves up as immigration officers and determine the status of these people is, I believe, improper.

The wheels of justice and government grind slowly, but grind they do. In some ways, the situation of the Salvadorans in this country is better than it was in the early '80s. The Supreme Court ruled in 1987 that the government would have to make its standards for political asylum more generous, which can only help the Salvadorans. As Crittenden reports, deportations have slowed down in recent years because Salvadorans and their attorneys have gotten savvier about the use of the asylum process. (There is a backlog of 100,000 applicants; according to a 1987 study by the General Accounting Office, only two percent of all aliens denied asylum were actually deported.) Many Salvadorans who arrived here before 1982 qualified for amnesty and permanent residence under the Simpson-Rodino immigration law enacted in 1987.

MEANWHILE, back in El Salvador, some 6,000 people, most of them supporters of the Marxist FMLN guerrillas, have returned in the last year to their home villages from refugee camps in Honduras. They join several leftist politicians who have returned and begun to participate in the electoral process. While both refugees and politicians have reported harassment, there are no documented cases of major human rights violations by the government against them (though there certainly have been major human rights violations in El Salvador in the last year). After nine years of war, El Salvador is still a far cry from a New England town meeting, but it's a long way from Nazi Germany, too. It's even a long way from El Salvador, 1980. One measure of the difference, in fact, is that the latest cause among the liberal denominations in the United States, many of which supported sanctuary, was to send relief supplies to the refugees going back to El Salvador. Sanctuary itself is passé.

Still, the issues raised in Crittenden's book remain relevant. First, there is the still unsettled fate of the several hundred thousand Salvadorans who came to the United States after the Simpson-Rodino law's 1982 amnesty cutoff. Second, there is the continuing exodus from El Salvador (which is being rapidly augmented by a new flood of escapees from collapsing Nicaragua). Do we really want to deport all the Salvadorans who are in this country illegally now, enjoying what Crittenden calls "de facto safe haven"? The prospect alarms Salvadoran authorities; they know that a mass return of its people would cost the country millions of dollars in remittances, and add to an already substantial unemployment problem. It seems neither in the humanitarian interest nor foreign policy interest of the United States to expel so many people who would only be a destabilizing burden on a home country still battling a Communist insurgency.

THE BEST alternative is to grant the Salvadorans already in the United States "extended voluntary departure." This special category of legal admission can be granted to people fleeing countries where there is "widespread fighting, destruction, and breakdown of public services and order," which is still a reasonable description of many parts of El Salvador. The Moakley-DeConcini bill pending before Congress would do basically that. Granted, such a precedent might encourage more immigration, but that seems no more perilous a risk than extending forever the legal limbo of the Salvadoran immigrants, or deporting them.

Immigration laws will always impose arbitrary distinctions on groups of would-be immigrants. Still, over the longer term, the sharp edges of that arbitrariness could be blunted by a couple of changes in the current law. First, raising the overall number of legal immigrants admitted every year from the current limit of 270,000 plus immediate relatives (approximately 510,000 total) to perhaps a million or so. And second, eliminating preference categories that favor skilled workers and those with relatives already in the states. These steps could make more room for people seeking freedom, opportunity, or a little of both—and reduce the incentives, both for immigrants and those who wish to help them, to go outside the law.

A sanctuary worker named Peggy ex-

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plained her actions to Crittenden this way:

> I could lobby Congress; I could work for extended voluntary departure; I could educate people; I could visit the jails and detention centers. That could be my ministry. Or I could get involved on a deeper level, with the sanctuary ministry. I studied the 1980 Refugee Act and the international refugee laws and concluded that it was the INS that was breaking the law. If the values I had been brought up by meant anything, I had to get involved in sanctuary.

Peggy's motives were understandable, even laudable. But she made the wrong choice.

CHARLES LANE

Charles Lane covers Central America for *Newsweek*. He lives in San Salvador.

TALES OF TWO NATIONS

The Silence in the Garden by William Trevor

(Viking, 204 pp., $17.95)

The county and city of Cork together have produced in recent times no fewer than four very distinguished writers of prose fiction. Elizabeth Bowen, whose standing as an original contributor to Modernism is high already and due to go higher, was of the country-dwelling gentry class of landowning Anglo-Irish Protestants, a tradition that her magnificent family biography *Bowen's Court* traces, criticizes, and finally elegizes. Bowen's almost exact contemporaries, Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain, born into the Catholic community in Cork city, took part in the struggle for independence from Britain and in the subsequent civil war. Both came to maturity as authors of international reputation at a time when Ireland—free at last if not altogether free—had lapsed back into provincialism, economic stagnation, and a cultural parochialism actually encouraged by the national leader Eamon de Valera, and presided over by priests, Gaelic language revivalists, and the notorious Irish Censorship Board. (During the 1940s in Dublin its list of proscribed works and authors was often referred to as an official guide to the world's greatest literature.)

William Trevor, the fourth of this distinguished group from Cork, came a generation later, in 1928. He was born at Mitchelstown in Elizabeth Bowen country, where a famous house, Mitchelstown Castle, had been ravaged and burned by rebel raiders during the Troubles. Trevor attended a boys school in County Dublin before taking a degree at Trinity College and was of an age to sit out World War II in Ireland (in which, it should be remembered, the Irish were neutral). After Trinity he seems to have taught several years in a private school before arriving in London in the early 1950s to have a try at the advertising business and then to launch a literary career. Producing a stream of finely crafted short stories and novels during the last 30 years, he has also written successfully for television and radio and won every serious literary prize Britain and Ireland have to offer.

Trevor has made his home in Devon, England, for some time, but in no sense has he put Ireland behind him. The key to his literary character is that he makes free with every aspect of the mixed traditions that produced him—Irish and English, Catholic and Protestant, religious and secular, urban and rural. A great onlooker and eavesdropper, he has said that an embracing curiosity is a good writer's first tool. That is not to suggest he is some sort of Anglo-Irish Studs Terkel. Trevor can be fiendishly clever in a purely literary sense. Take "Beyond the Pale," the title story for his 1981 collection of short fiction. In a story about two intertwined English couples on their annual vacation in a bijou hotel in the Glens of Antrim, Northern Ireland, Trevor, in a somewhat Jamesian way—that is to say, indirectly—encompasses the troubled politics of that region. But to call it Jamesian is misleading, for the story actually and deliberately rewrites the complex plotting of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*,

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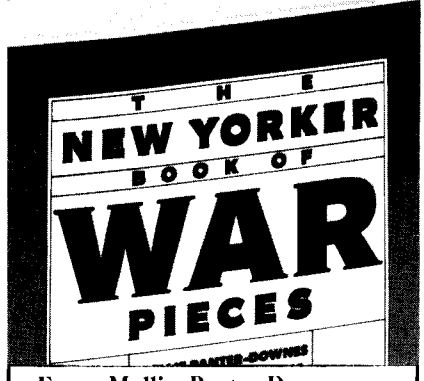

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using the Northern Irish conflict of Protestant and Catholic as an analogue to Ford's theme of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The story is a miracle of compression.

Trevor's first novel, *A Standard of Behaviour* (1958), covered the uncertainty and drift of early adulthood. In it, Trevor displayed an urban bohemia of exceptional seediness, inhabited by would-be artists and writers and patrolled by Circe-like hostesses, avid for the companionship of the aimless young. One is never sure whether the ambience is Irish or English, though a recollected school adventure of getting drunk with school servant girls points to Ireland. There is also comedy. A gentleman farmer, Uncle Ned, who is introduced beating a newborn calf, conducts hostilities against all his domestic animals on the ground that they are greedy, malignant, dumb, obstinate, and dirty. And there is the surprising suicide of an old school chum to undermine further the diffident narrator's confidence in what lies ahead. This little book owed something to early Waugh, something to *The Ginger Man*, and left its author free to proceed in almost any direction.

THE DIRECTION Trevor took had already been laid out by Frank O'Connor in his study of the short story, called *The Lonely Voice*. O'Connor claimed that short fiction was best suited to portray isolated and lonely souls, those who by choice or fate had become marginal in their societies. Trevor's "The General's Day," a disturbingly funny story about a retired World War II officer in his 70s in an English village, coming apart from lonesomeness (along with too many gins), demonstrated a mastery of the O'Connor formula, as did other early stories such as "The Table" and "The Penthouse Apartment." These latter show an intimate knowledge of London life; and all three display a mastery of dialogue. (Two of the stories were easily rescripted for broadcasting.)

Trevor's urbanity did not prevent him, however, from dealing easily with rural scenes. "The Ballroom of Romance," the title story of his 1972 collection, is one of his greatest successes. It is about Bridie, the 39-year-old daughter of an Irish farmer, whose one night out, year in year out, is Saturday, which she spends at a rural dance hall. On this particular night, her forlorn hope of making a connection with the one decent unmarried man who comes there is finally disappointed.

Trevor does sometimes load the dice. One can feel of his situations what Matthew Arnold felt about his own early poems: that there is everything to be suffered and nothing to be done. Granted that the appealing Bridie is entrapped since the death of her mother, but did her father have to be a crippled leg amputee as well? The lonesomeness and hardship of Irish rural life in the 1970s is less convincing or typical than it would have seemed in the 1930s and '40s, when O'Connor was doing his best work.

Trevor is also not above occasional self-plagiarizing. "In Isfahan," dating from a 1975 collection, describes an encounter between travelers in which a cold, possibly impotent Englishman rebuffs the advances of an Englishwoman unhappily married to an Indian businessman. Ten years later he published "Cocktails at Doney's," set in Florence, in which an impotent-seeming Englishman rebuffs the advances of a beautiful, unsuitably married American woman. Trevor's fiction is full of emotionally blocked and frozen men, some of them closet homosexuals, a number of whom have not consummated even their marriages. This subject has its fascinations, but the repetition can be a little too much at times.

TREVOR'S first big success in the novel was with *The Old Boys* (1964), about the competition among ancient men to become president of the Old Boys Association of a 500-year-old public (that is, private) school. A leading candidate is Jaraby, a former school bully, who tyrannizes over his wife and has driven his 40-year-old son into a life of vagabondage and sociopathy. The wife is wonderful. Her desperate unhappiness in marriage has sharpened her wits and brought her to an independence of outlook that is virtually saintly, and which Jaraby, who is quite mad himself, mistakes for insanity. *The Old Boys* is a leading document in a lifelong struggle Trevor has been conducting against public schools for boys, for the callowness and cruelty of their class values, and for the brutal manner in which they distort the social and sexual development of their juvenile clients. He won't win, of course, for the simple reason that those English people devoted to public schools tend to regard all attacks as more tribute to the superiority of the system itself. Trevor's knockout story "Torridge," from the 1970s, tells the same story—all on the theme of school romance and sex play, showing how these experiences, whether freely or involuntarily undergone, are left behind, and yet not left behind, in later life.

IN THE 1970s, *The Children of Dynmouth* (1976) stands out—a book that, though not exactly lovable, is impossible to forget. Set in a run-down Devon coastal resort during the days preceding Easter, it displays a number of maimed rites and shocking incidents designed, I believe, to show the failure of communal bonds not only in this particular town, but in Britain as a whole. Its principal characters include a hard-pressed vicar on whose doorstep arrive all the crazy, the neglected, and the superannuated people, while he must attend to his wife's severe depression over a recent stillbirth and the inspired mischief of their four-year-old twins. The town is being harried by Timothy Gedge, a latchkey child, now a 15-year-old village scourge and blackmailer.

This not-so-tiny Tim appears to represent the community's bad conscience incarnated as a youthful psychopath. Among his targets are Kate and Stephen, honorable and sensitive 12-year-olds whose respective mother and father have just married and gone off on a brief wedding trip. Timothy wants Stephen to believe that his mother, who accidentally fell from the cliff path to her death, was pushed by Stephen's father, an ornithologist who was having a clandestine affair with Kate's divorced mother. Gedge's other targets for blackmail include a tough whoring pub keeper who occasionally makes out with Gedge's mother in the Dynmouth public lavatories, and Commander Abigail, a fondler of cub scouts who has lived chastely with his wife of 36 years without ever confessing to certain proclivities.

Gedge's weird characterization is something of a tour de force. But his remarkable success as a snooper, and the fact that nobody in town, not even the publican, can stand up to him strains belief. The book edges into parable, in the form of a debate between Kate, who thinks Gedge is possessed by devils, and the vicar, who believes the boy is just a neglected offspring trying to get attention, another twist on the British-Irish debate between a religion of magic and a religion of Anglican trimming.

The religious question aside, *The Children of Dynmouth* is successful in its picture of the curiously snakebitten and defeatist atmosphere of Britain during the mid-1970s, when the country seemed to

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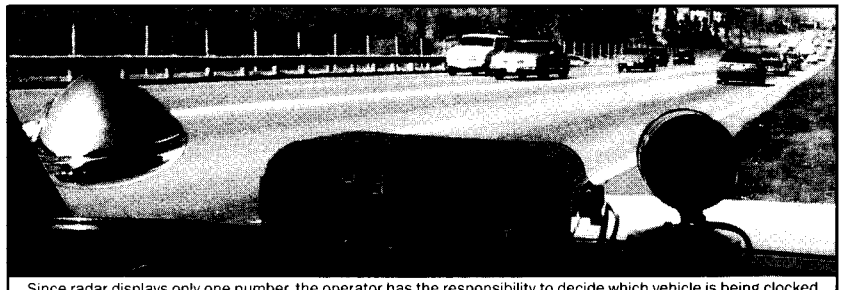
have run out of luck. This was the era of stagflation, when pop, TV, and youth culture all seemed to go a little rotten at the same time, when Great Britain was called "the sick man of Europe." Naturally Kate and the Reverend couldn't know that governessy Margaret Thatcher was waiting in the wings, birch rod in hand, quite prepared to go at the Gedges of this society until they stopped making nuisances of themselves. Timothy's "eyes were the eyes of the battered except that no one had ever battered him." The decade to come would fix that.

During the 1980s Trevor got around to examining or meditating upon his Anglo-Irish roots. As well as the long story, *The News from Ireland* (1986), set during the great famine of 1847-48, he wrote *Fools of Fortune* (1982), a romantic epic about the destruction of a great house and the blighting of a great English and Irish family, the Quintons, in the era of the Anglo-Irish War (1918-21). It is the novel that really made Trevor's reputation among American readers. Its Gothic and Romance conventions draw on Faulkner's example in *Absalom! Absalom!*, and the Yeats of *Ancestral Houses* and *Purgatory*, who chose the Gothic mode to demonstrate how violence and beauty are woven together in an agrarian tradition centering upon great "aristocratic" houses. Early in the 19th century, the somewhat deranged Dublin clergyman Maturin, who wrote *Melmoth*, the greatest of Anglo-Irish Gothics, remarked that "Ireland is the country where the Gothic happens—daily." No subsequent Anglo-Irish writer who is any good, not even Beckett, has neglected to put that insight to work.

YET TREVOR'S new novel, *The Silence in the Garden*, does try to cut back on melodrama, on grand gestures and appalling turns of fate. It covers the period 1904 to 1974, but focuses on 1931, the year when the island demesne of Carriglas, home of the Pollexfens, lost its lordly isolation. (A bridge replaced the small ferry as a link between Carriglas and the mainland village the Pollexfens formerly controlled as the landlords.) One notices that Trevor does not choose to write directly about the Northern Irish political troubles, which have racked both Ireland and Britain since 1969. Still, the intense moral scrutiny to which he subjects Anglo-Irish tradition, the tradition of those who have controlled most of the land, wealth, and political power in Ireland for several hundred years, inevitably reflects, though only indirectly, the new round of troubles in the North.

The guilt and violence are personalized, the arrogance and unfeelingness bred in a tradition of privilege are scaled down to small acts of delinquency: the Pollexfen children hunt after a tenant's child with an old shotgun during one long summer. It's hard to make as much of this as Trevor does when our daily newspapers tell us of children setting fire to homeless men in city parks or operating crack parlors. Indeed, this book seems somewhat under-imagined—an unusual complaint to bring against Trevor—and over-fussy in the way it shuttles back and forth between various dates and events of the 70 years it covers. By 1931, the year the bridge was completed, the Anglo-Irish had already been marginalized in de Valera's new Ireland, though local populations were generally too polite to tell the surviving "quality" to their faces how little they mattered. Besides, 1931 was a year of appalling dullness in Ireland, as cultural parochialism took hold and memories of the great days of struggle following the 1916 Easter Rising were dimmed. Trevor, a writer too honest to pretend it was otherwise, is powerless to prevent the dullness from spreading through his



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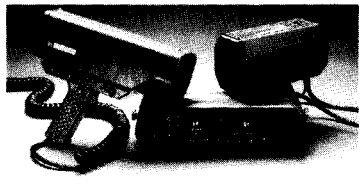

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book, like dank mist off a bog.

If the vein of Anglo-Irish big house romance is really worked out, as this last, sad effort suggests it is, what should this fine writer now be doing? With his ample gifts of irony, compassion, and wry humor, and with the scrupulous craft of a minor master, there is a simple solution: he should return to the ordinarily human beings around him, the overlooked lives of Thatcherite England, the new Ireland of technocrats, Eurocrats, and nervously emigrating educated young. It is Trevor's unique destiny to find his roots in neither one country nor the other but in both. And both countries need him now.

JULIAN MOYNAHAN

Julian Moynahan is professor of English at Rutgers and has just finished a book on Anglo-Irish literature.

THE PAINTERS' SAINT

Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris by Joan Ungersma Halperin

(Yale University Press, 400 pp., $35)

Who was Félix Fénéon? Ask the average well-educated person today, and the name would probably ring no bells. Even the art aficionado who may have heard of him would be hard-pressed to give a good account of his accomplishments. Yet he was one of those cultural personalities who leave indelible marks on their epochs without writing an important book or poem, or painting a significant picture. He was, we might say, Clement Greenberg, Leo Castelli, Philip Rahv, and Eldridge Cleaver rolled into one.

In truth, our time really cannot furnish analogies for the kind of intellectual style that Fénéon sported during the two decades before 1900 and the years immediately after. He was an "*homme de goût*" whose politics were of the far left even though he held a government job in, of all things, the "war office." Try to comprehend the range of his intellect's direct hits. He edited most of the significant advanced literary magazines of his epoch in Paris, and published Mallarmé, Rimbaud (*The Illuminations*), Valéry, Verlaine, and others. He wrote the art critical journalism that established Seurat as a master (he became Seurat's friend and executor), and also wrote early and perceptively about Gauguin, Signac, Bonnard, van Dongen, and other important modernists. For more than 20 years he directed the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery, which showed all the painters mentioned above, plus Matisse, Vuillard, Cézanne, and other masters. And, without any wealth of his own, he assembled a major private collection of the art he adored, portions of which are now in the London National Gallery, the Musée d'Orsay, the Courtauld, and many other museums and private collections.

Now there is more. According to Joan Halperin, the author of this major biography, who has devoted much of her academic life to uncovering the truth about this mysterious man, Fénéon was also a terrorist, who, in 1894, threw a potted plant containing explosives into a crowded restaurant frequented by politicians. That crime was never officially solved. It is true that Fénéon was an avowed anarchist (of the literary artistic type, not uncommon in fin-de-siècle Europe: Camille Pissarro, for instance, was a gentle anarchist). But Halperin hangs her attribution, and her graphic description of this act, on a very thin reed indeed. She even makes a partial disclaimer in a footnote where she says, "... fairness to Fénéon's memory requires that doubt about his role in the bombing be recognized." In fact, her own book serves as a negation of this absurd charge. In making Fénéon the very paradigm of an éminence grise, a cynical observer, and a master of the disappearing act in the history of his time, the author gets too carried away with the masks behind which her subject hides. There is no credible evidence whatsoever for her sensational charge. It is unfortunate that it will inevitably color the reception of this otherwise wonderfully informative book, as well as unfairly taint the memory of the extraordinary man she has helped to rescue from oblivion.

Halperin is particularly good on the interplay between the utopian anarchism of the time and the world of Post-Impressionist aesthetics and symbolist literature. Without promulgating her own political agenda, her impressive research has uncovered still deeper and more hidden connections between radical art and social radicalism in the period of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist ferment. Fénéon was only one example, and a singularly interesting one, among artists, poets, critics and editors who reflected the avant-garde's antagonism to a corrupt, selfish, excessively bourgeois society, not unlike our own today.

Fénéon's intellect was brilliant, but it was laconic, cynical, and secretive. His physical presence—with his goatee, his ramrod straight posture, and his courtly manners—all contributed to the myth of him as a kind of guru, not unlike the reputation of Marcel Duchamp in the years after he gave up painting. While he never sought to enrich himself, earning only a salary, and later perhaps a small commission from the Bernheims for his clever and lucrative direction of their firm, his biographer maintains that even those earnings were diminished by his regular gifts to needy families and struggling artists.

Fénéon devised the system of artists' contracts with galleries that still prevails today—enabling great men like Matisse to be assured of regular incomes through guaranteed purchases by the gallery at fixed prices per canvas size. This provided them freedom from the necessity of peddling their own wares, while still keeping autonomy over the part of the production that they retained. While affecting unconcern with matters of business, he proved to be a subtle and effective businessman, traveling all over Europe to deal with millionaire collectors yet constantly referring to himself among his friends as a communist. Halperin, without actually saying it, implies that Fénéon, in his self-effacement, his unselfish love of art, his genuine anguish for the unfortunate and desperate, was a kind of modern saint.

Purely from the perspective of art history, the account here of Fénéon's reaction to Seurat's first great painting, *Une Baignade* or *Bathing at Asnières* (which he later owned), his clear explication of pointillism with its scientific theory of color, and the complex misunderstandings between these two very private men is a fascinating tale. Not everyone today is aware of how much hope for the future of art lay with Seurat and his followers after the breakup and disarray of

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the older impressionists. Like the underlying rivalry between Pollock and de Kooning in the New York art world of 1950, Gauguin rivaled and yearned to supplant Seurat as the leader of the pack and the way to the future. After Seurat's sudden death in 1891, around the time that Gauguin left for Tahiti, Fénéon quietly continued his support of the Neo-Impressionists, and for many years kept close track of Seurat's work, organizing the exhibitions that have established his lofty place.

IN DESCRIBING Fénéon in all the astonishing diversity of his roles, Halperin gives a thorough account of intellectual life in late-19th-century France. Of course, the climax of this book is its treatment of the "Trial of the Thirty." In the wake of a series of bombings and the assassination of the French president Sadi Carnot, Fénéon was arrested in 1894, and was imprisoned and tried in a sensational case, not for the crimes his present biographer ascribes to him, but, along with others, simply for believing in anarchist ideals, for having friends who believed in anarchism, and, under a new repressive law, for participating in a conspiracy. At first he refused to answer any questions at all before the investigating magistrate but behaved in prison with his usual aplomb. When Fénéon was visited by Thadée Nathanson, a lawyer, the husband of the famous Misia and founder of the new magazine *La Revue Blanche*, he replied to Nathanson's offer to bring whatever he might need by asking for shoe polish, saying it was in rather short supply where he was. He comported himself cleverly and effectively during the trial as well, his sardonic demolishing of the prosecutor and his flimsy evidence winning over the Paris press. With a six-to-six tie vote of the jury, he was acquitted under French law, along with most of the co-conspirators. Among several citizens who were brave enough to step forward and testify on his behalf, Mallarmé took the stand. He is said to have testified:

> I know Félix Fénéon. He is beloved by all. I have pledged him my friendship because he is a gentle and an upright man, and a very fine intellect. We have met in my home, on evenings when I gather friends to chat. There is no one who has not enjoyed meeting him. I have never, nor have any of my guests, heard Fénéon discuss a subject alien to art. I know he is above using anything other than literature to express his thought. I have gladly responded to a summons not so much because of the real fondness I feel for him as in the interests of truth.

Joan Halperin did not take those words sufficiently to heart in seeking a sensational denouement that her subject neither needs nor deserves. Moreover, in her eagerness to appropriate Fénéon as her own private academic turf, Halperin is less than fair to John Rewald, whose two-part article 41 years ago in English in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* contains much of the story of her book, many of the same illustrations and footnotes to all the main sources that she later used. Since he knew Fénéon intimately and is probably the only still-living source of direct information about him, Halperin's minimal use of his firsthand information and her lack of proper acknowledgment of what she did use is puzzling and unworthy. Still, she has brought to life again an amazing character who sought oblivion, but must always be remembered as a major figure in the culture of modernism in which we are all still immersed.

E. V. THAW

MASTER OF MOMENTS

Selected Stories by Andre Dubus

(David R. Godine, 476 pp., $22.50)

A woman and her grown son are sitting after hours in the restaurant where she works, discussing the son's unhappiness. The woman says, "You know why I like my waitress friends so much? And what I've learned from them? They don't have delusions. So when I'm alone at night . . . I look out my window, and it comes to me: we don't have to live great lives, we just have to understand and survive the ones we've got."

A man struggling along on his own after his wife has left him reflects, "It is not hard to live through a day, if you can live through a moment. What creates despair is the imagination, which pretends there is a future, and insists on predicting millions of moments, thousands of days, and so drains you that you cannot live the moment at hand."

And a newly divorced father of two young children tries to adjust to solitude:

> He separated his days into parts, thought about each one, and learned that all of them were not bad. When the alarm woke him in the winter dark, the new day and waiting night were the gray of the room, and they pressed down on him, fetid repetitions bent on smothering his spirit before he rose from the bed. But he got up quickly, made the bed while the sheets still held his warmth, and once in the kitchen with coffee and newspaper he moved into the first part of the day . . . as near-peaceful as he dared hope for . . .

These three—citizens, all, of Andre Dubus's sad, brave, gritty fictional world—have in common a heartening willingness to confront head on the conditions of their lives. There is nothing unique about the conditions themselves. Heaven knows, modern literature is full of lonely, muddled people in reduced circumstances, drifting (as many of these characters do) toward self-destruction on a tide of booze and violence. But most other writers are content simply to plop their characters in these straits and leave them there. Most other stories end, or rather, trail away, in a flat refusal to look beyond the fistful of pills, the black eye, the morning hangover. Andre Dubus is not so easily satisfied. He forces his people to question their situations, sometimes coming up with answers and sometimes not, but nearly always demonstrating conscience and intelligence. In short, he feels morally responsible for his characters, and it's this sense of responsibility that gives his work its backbone.

Selected Stories contains 23 pieces, two of which have never before appeared in book form. Longtime admirers of Dubus's work will be pleased to see that each of his many concerns is fully represented. "The Pitcher" and "After the Game" reflect his passion for baseball; "Cadence" draws upon his experience in the Marines; and "If They Knew

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Yvonne" and "Adultery," among others, reveal his deep Catholic roots. What's most important, though, is the overall effect. The storekeepers, bartenders, construction workers, short-order cooks, and housewives in these stories are so lovingly detailed, their inner worlds so thoroughly explored, that we close the book with the feeling that we've finished a group of novels—rich, teeming, bountiful novels at that.

In "The Pretty Girl," which is perhaps the most stunning piece in the collection, a ruffian named Ray rapes his estranged wife, beats an ex-lover of hers to a pulp, and surrounds her house with a circle of flames. It would be hard to imagine a character more despicable. Yet when he shows up in her bedroom one night, there is something bewildered and wounded and, yes, even likable about him. "I just want to talk," he says, and, "What did I ever do anyways?" and, "No, come on: what did I do?" The story calls up the most complicated emotions. It's an unblinking story; it refuses, absolutely, to screen out the messy other side of things, the stray doubts and the "yes, buts" and the mitigating circumstances.

In "Killings," a father grieving for his murdered son is appalled to find the murderer at large, released on bail and casually appearing about town. Finally the father can stand it no longer; he kidnaps the man and shoots him through the head. To us readers, revenge is sweet; we feel a clear sense of satisfaction as he pulls the trigger. But here again, we're not allowed to get off so lightly. We're shown the careful tidiness of the murderer's apartment; we see how meekly and reasonably he behaves when he still has some hope of being spared. (Forced to drive at gunpoint, he asks, "You wouldn't have the gun cocked, would you? For when I put on the brakes.") And yet none of this lessens our feeling of wicked satisfaction; that's what makes the story so affecting.

"A Father's Story" examines the reaction of a middle-aged man—a devout Catholic—when his daughter confides that she has hit somebody with her car. The father might conceivably save the victim's life by reporting the accident at once, but he thinks instead of his daughter's life, and he chooses to keep it a secret. If it had been one of his sons, he says, he would not have done so. Why? he imagines God asking. Does he love his sons less? No, the father says. "But You never had a daughter and if You had, You could not have borne her passion."

> So, He says, you love her more than you love Me.
> I love her more than I love truth.
> Then you love in weakness, He says.
> As you love me, I say . . .

Another writer might have told the same story but stopped a bit sooner, omitting the question of daughter versus sons, omitting the dialogue with God. That's not Andre Dubus's style. He has a way of stepping forth, however thin the ice.

In "Voices from the Moon," a man is shattered by the news that his ex-wife and his father have fallen in love. He goes to his mother for comfort, which, amazingly, she manages to give him. She predicts the gradual way his hurts will heal, the step-by-step manner in which he and his father will regain their old closeness until one day they can actually sit down to dinner together without dwelling on the past. It's this long, astonishing speech of hers, ending with her remark about not having to live great lives, that elevates the story from soap opera to literature. Another writer might have been content merely to define the situation and then turn away, conveniently ignoring the knotty question of how these people will proceed from here on out. But Dubus forges ahead—again, unblinking.

Not all of the stories work equally well. A few come to an end before the act of forging ahead can be accomplished; several are marred by a dreamlike, rhythmic writing style that suggests the author may have put himself into a trance with his own words. ("For a long time she had not been afraid of people or the chances of a day, for she believed she could bear the normal pain of being alive: her heart had been broken by girls and boys, and she had borne that, and she had broken hearts and borne that too, and embarrassment and shame and humiliation and failure, and she was not one of those who, once or more wounded, waited fearfully for the next mistake or cruelty or portion of bad luck.")

Also, an introduction would have been welcome—a word from Dubus about why certain stories were included and others left out, and perhaps a brief glance backward over the 20-some years of his career. But it may be greedy to wish for that, when what we've been given is so much: a fine, hefty, deeply rewarding collection from one of this country's ablest writers.

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CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

ENDS AND MEANS

To the editors:

To answer one of Mark Campisano's questions ("An Exchange on the ACLU," December 12): Yes, I do see a difference between racial equality of opportunity and affirmative action, and I am sure that the American Civil Liberties Union does as well. The former is an end to which we aspire while the latter is a sometimes necessary means to an end. To believe that our government could create equality of opportunity by adopting racially neutral laws at all times, as Campisano apparently does, is naive, revealing a shallowness regarding history and current affairs worthy of Dan "I didn't live in this century" Quayle.

MICHAEL A. SHEA
Jersey City, New Jersey

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Identity, History, Nostalgia

"THE PAST IS A foreign country." This assertion, the metaphorical title of a remarkable book published four years ago by David Lowenthal of University College, London, applies literally to the ancestries of virtually all Americans. Jesse Jackson wants this truism to be expressed in the term by which the country's black citizens are identified. And why not? No harm will be done if "African-American" replaces "black." But no great good, I'm afraid. What is a bit disturbing is the weight that some black leaders and intellectuals want such nomenclature to carry. The fact that descendants of immigrants from Poland may be referred to as Polish-Americans has not, after all, exactly put them high on the ladders Jesse Jackson hopes the children of his group will climb. In arguing that African-American is the right black badge of belonging, Jackson laments, "There is so much despair in our children, so much dope, crime, self-destruction, such aimlessness. They feel so unimportant in themselves." We recognize his description. His solution: "We must attempt to lift our children by the power of their culture." It's a nice idea and an old one. But it won't work, sad to say. People are drawn to it mainly because of the palpable failures of more concrete social initiatives.

I SUSPECT THEY'RE drawn to it also because they misread the history of other ethnic and racial groups in our country. After the late-19th- and early-20th-century migrations, two influential writers, Randolph Bourne and Horace M. Kallen, envisioned in the pages of this magazine a country enriched by the resilient cultures of the newcomers, what Bourne called "transnational America." (In our day the phrase sounds more like the name of a financial conglomerate.) In this illumination the children and grandchildren of these people would keep their own distinctive languages and literatures, values and traditions, even as they entered the mainstream and rose in it. Kallen prophesied an American democracy of semi-autonomous nationalities. The fact is, though, that while America never legally required any newcomer to check his identity, social and economic pressures did. To advance, in America and in English, meant relentlessly to shuck off both the tangibles and the abstractions of the old country. No immigrant group was exempt from this harsh and inexorable process of self-denial. To be sure, the diversity of American origins is what has defined that vague amalgam called the American character; some of what was shucked off did enter the whole. But what is generally left of the immigrant cultures in the lives of their heirs is sparse. It's largely nostalgia for twice-removed memories, a few foul words, and a residual culinary preference.

THE GREAT HISTORIAN Marcus Hansen said a half century ago that we can expect in the future a revival of interest in their origins by the third generation of immigrant families, a luxury of successful assimilation. This delayed interest has been most apparent among the Jews, but it's easy to exaggerate its content. What the revival means mostly, even among very involved Jews, is more sentiment than substance. There's the Holocaust and there's Israel, to be sure; and then there's ignorance. Your more-concerned-than-average Jew doesn't know the name of a single Hebrew or Yiddish poet, let alone a line of his poetry. She thinks Maimonides is the name of a hospital. Jewish culture? Marx, Freud, Mahler, Einstein. Jewish values? Oh, some banality about justice. This shallowness despite the fact that many Jews have had the advantage, in this regard, of thinking of themselves, and being thought of, not as Jewish Americans but as American Jews—Jews being the noun, the existential identity.

UNLIKE OTHER GROUPS to which the notion of African-American implies an explicit comparison, blacks will not in our time have the problem of having been much mixed up, racially and ethnically, with others. The lines back to Africa will remain unobscured. Still, as a group, they won't be able simply to retrieve African culture as an afterthought to having been integrated into the norms and realities of middle-class America. Would that it were so. But it isn't. Of course, Jackson's idea is that Africa be retrieved not as an afterthought to anything but as a precondition, "to lift our children by the power of their culture." This is ideology disguised as pedagogy. The raw truth is that the idea of Africa and Africanness will prove elusive. First of all, there's no one to teach it. God knows, there aren't even enough qualified inner-city teachers of reading and arithmetic. And how many children of the ghetto, of mothers without husbands, of crack, of MTV, can relate to that distant and cutoff culture as their own? Isn't Africa really irrelevant to their present circumstances? Black children are so far behind in literacy and numeracy, in the handling of information technology. Wouldn't this turn toward Africa be a diversion from truly urgent imperatives?

LONG AGO, when I was a Ph.D. student, one of my special fields was African nationalism. Some people thought then, and some think now, that Africa has no history; it is a racist assumption. But its history is complicated and, like the histories of most peoples, hard to harness honestly to present ideological purposes. For example, the slave trade, to which Jackson erroneously says our history books are indifferent, depended on the cruelty and cupidity not just of Europeans and Americans, but of Africans willing to sell other Africans into servitude. What kind of pride will this induce? Moreover, given that illiteracy is one of the greatest burdens borne by American blacks, I wonder why Jackson thinks it wise to canonize a preliterate culture. But there were in Africa also exceptional triumphs of urban and agricultural civilization. Of these—the commerce of Mali, the statecraft of the Ashanti, the arts of Benin and Dahomey—I suspect, without really knowing, that even Jesse Jackson, the spokesman for African culture, knows next to nothing. But then I suspect also that Michael Dukakis couldn't put two coherent sentences together about Praxiteles or Kitty Dukakis about Rashi either.

MARTIN PERETZ

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